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# **THE HISTORY OF DAVID GRIEVE**

**VOL. II**



Ward, Mary Augusta Arnold  
THE HISTORY

OF

DAVID GRIEVE

BY

MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

AUTHOR OF 'ROBERT ELSMERE'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

New York  
MACMILLAN AND CO.  
AND LONDON  
1892

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BOOK III—(*Continued*)  
STORM AND STRESS



## CHAPTER IV

DAVID and Elise Delaunay thus found themselves left alone. She stood a moment irresolutely before her canvas, then sat down again, and took up her brushes.

'I cannot thank you enough, Mademoiselle,' the young fellow began shyly, while the hand which held his stick trembled a little. 'We could never have arranged that affair for ourselves.'

She coloured and bent over her canvas.

'I don't know why I troubled myself,' she said, in a curious irritable way.

'Because you are kind!' he cried, his charming smile breaking. 'Because you took pity on a pair of strangers, like the guardian angel that you are!'

The effect of the foreign language on him leading him to a more set and literary form of expression than he would have naturally used, was clearly marked in the little outburst.

Elise bit her lip, frowned and fidgeted, and presently looked him straight in the face.

'Monsieur David, warn your sister that that man with the Cervins this morning—the man in grey, the sculptor, M. Montjoie—is a disreputable scoundrel that no decent woman should know.'

David was taken aback.

'And Madame Cervin——'

Elise raised her shoulders.

'I don't offer a solution,' she said; 'but I have warned you.'

'Monsieur Cervin has a somewhat strange appearance,' said David, hesitating.

And, in fact, while the negotiations had been going on there had stood beside the talkers a shabby, slouching figure of a man, with longish grizzled hair and a sleepy eye—a strange, remote creature, who seemed to take very little notice of what was passing before him. From various indications, however, in the conversation, David had gathered that this looker-on must be the former *prix de Rome*.

Elise explained that Monsieur Cervin was the wreck of a genius. In his youth he had been the chosen pupil of Ingres and Hippolyte Flandrin, had won the *prix de Rome*, and after his three years in the Villa Medici had come home to take up what was expected to be a brilliant career. Then for some mysterious reason he had suddenly gone under, disappeared from sight, and the waves of Paris had closed over him. When he reappeared he was broken in health, and married to a retired modiste, upon whose money he was living. He painted bad pictures intermittently, but spent most of his time in hanging about his old haunts—the Louvre, the Salon, the various exhibitions, and the dealers, where he was commonly regarded by the younger artists who were on speaking terms with him as a tragic old bore, with a head of his own worth painting, however, if he could be got to sit—for an augur or a chief priest.

'It was *absinthe* that did it,' said Elise calmly, taking a fresh charge into her brush, and working away at the black trimmings of the Infanta's dress. 'Every day, about four, he disappears into the Boulevard. Generally, Madame Cervin drives him like a sheep; but when four o'clock comes she daren't interfere

with him. If she did, he would be unmanageable altogether. So he takes his two hours or so, and when he comes back there is not much amiss with him. Sometimes he is excited, and talks quite brilliantly about the past—sometimes he is nervous and depressed, starts at a sound, and storms about the noises in the street. Then she hurries him off to bed, and next morning he is quite meek again, and tries to paint. But his hand shakes, and he can't see. So he gives it up, and calls to her to put on her things. Then they wander about Paris, till four o'clock comes round again, and he gives her the slip—always with some elaborate pretence or other. Oh! she takes it quietly. Other vices might give her more trouble.'

The tone conveyed the affectation of a complete knowledge of the world, which saw no reason whatever to be ashamed of itself. The girl was just twenty, but she had lived for years, first with a disreputable father, and then in a perpetual *camaraderie*, within the field of art, with men of all sorts and kinds. There are certain feminine blooms which a *milieu* like this effaces with deadly rapidity.

For the first time David was jarred. The idealist in him recoiled. His conscience, too, was roused about Louie. He had handed her over, it seemed, to the custody of a drunkard and his wife, who had immediately thrown her into the company of a man no decent woman ought to know. And Mademoiselle Delaunay had led him into it. The guardian angel speech of a few moments before rang in his ears uncomfortably.

Moreover, whatever rebellions his young imagination might harbour, whatever license in his eyes the great passions might claim, he had maintained for months and years past a practical asceticism, which



had left its mark. The young man who had starved so gaily on sixpence a day that he might read and learn, had nothing but impatience and disgust for the glutton and the drunkard. It was a kind of physical repulsion. And the woman's light indulgent tone seemed for a moment to divide them.

Elise looked round. Why this silence in her companion?

In an instant she divined him. Perhaps her own conscience was not easy. Why had she meddled in the young Englishman's affairs at all? For a whim? Out of a mere good-natured wish to rid him of his troublesome sister; or because his handsome looks, his *naïveté*, and his eager admiration of herself amused and excited her, and she did not care to be baulked of them so soon? At any rate, she found refuge in an outburst of temper.

'Ah!' she said, after a moment's pause and scrutiny. 'I see! You think I might have done better for your sister than send her to lodge with a drunkard—that I need not have taken so much trouble to give you good advice for that! You repent your little remarks about guardian angels! You are disappointed in me!—you distrust me!'

She turned back to her easel and began to paint with headlong speed, the small hand flashing to and fro, the quick breath rising and falling tempestuously.

He was dismayed—afraid, and he began to make excuses both for himself and her. It would be all right; he should be close by, and if there were trouble he could take his sister away.

She let her brushes fall into her lap with an exclamation.

'Listen!' she said to him, her eyes blazing—why, he could not for the life of him understand. 'There will be no trouble. What I told you means nothing

open—or disgusting. Your sister will notice nothing unless you tell her. But I was candid with you—I always am. I told you last night that I had no scruples. You thought it was a woman's exaggeration; it was the literal truth! If a man drinks, or is vicious, so long as he doesn't hurl the furniture at my head, or behave himself offensively to me, what does it matter to me! If he drinks so that he can't paint, and he wants to paint, well!—then he seems to me another instance of the charming way in which a kind Providence has arranged this world. I am sorry for him, *tout bonnement*! If I could give the poor devil a hand out of the mud, I would; if not, well, then, no sermons! I take him as I find him; if he annoys me, I call in the police. But as to hiding my face and canting, not at all! That is your English way—it is the way of our *bourgeoisie*. It is not mine. I don't belong to the respectables—I would sooner kill myself a dozen times over. I can't breathe in their company. I know how to protect myself; none of the men I meet dare to insult me; that is my idiosyncrasy—everyone has his own. But I have my ideas, and nobody else matters a fig to me.—So now, Monsieur, if you regret our forced introduction of last night, let me wish you a good morning. It will be perfectly easy for your sister to find some excuse to leave the Cervins. I can give you the addresses of several cheap hotels where you and she will be extremely comfortable, and where neither I nor Monsieur Cervin will annoy you!'

David stared at her. He had grown very pale. She, too, was white to the lips. The violence and passion of her speech had exhausted her; her hands trembled in her lap. A wave of emotion swept through him. Her words were insolently bitter. Why, then, this impression of something wounded and young and

struggling—at war with itself and the world, proclaiming loneliness and *Sehnsucht*, while it flung anger and reproach?

He dropped on one knee, hardly knowing what he did. Most of the students about had left their work for a while; no one was in sight but a *gardien* whose back was turned to them, and a young man in the remote distance. He picked up a brush she had let fall, pressed it into her reluctant hand, and laid his forehead against the hand for an instant.

‘You misunderstand me,’ he said, with a broken, breathless utterance. ‘You are quite wrong—quite mistaken. There are not such thoughts in me as you think. The world matters nothing to me, either. I am alone, too; I have always been alone. You meant everything that was heavenly and kind—you must have meant it. I am a stupid idiot! But I could be your friend—if you would permit it.’

He spoke with an extraordinary timidity and slowness. He forgot all his scruples, all pride—everything. As he knelt there, so close to her delicate slimness, to the curls on her white neck, to the quivering lips and great, defiant eyes, she seemed to him once more a being of another clay from himself—beyond any criticism his audacity could form. He dared hardly touch her, and in his heart there swelled the first irrevocable wave of young passion.

She raised her hand impetuously and began to paint again. But suddenly a tear dropped on to her knee. She brushed it away, and her wild smile broke.

‘Bah!’ she said, ‘what a scene, what a pair of children! What was it all about? I vow I haven’t an idea. You are an excellent *farceur*, Monsieur David! One can see well that you have read George Sand.’

He sat down on a little three-legged stool she had brought with her, and held her box open on his knee.

In a minute or two they were talking as though nothing had happened. She was giving him a fresh lecture on Velazquez, and he had resumed his rôle of pupil and listener. But their eyes avoided each other, and once when, in taking a tube from the box he held, her fingers brushed against his hand, she flushed involuntarily and moved her chair a foot further away.

'Who is that?' she asked, suddenly looking round the corner of her canvas. '*Mon Dieu!* M. Regnault! How does he come here? They told me he was at Granada.'

She sat transfixed, a joyous excitement illuminating every feature. And there, a few yards from them, examining the Rembrandt 'Supper at Emmaus' with a minute and absorbed attention, was the young man he had noticed in the distance a few minutes before. As Elise spoke, the new-comer apparently heard his name, and turned. He put up his eyeglass, smiled, and took off his hat.

'Mademoiselle Delaunay! I find you where I left you, at the feet of the master! Always at work! You are indefatigable. Taranne tells me great things of you. "Ah," he says, "if the men would work like the women!" I assure you, he makes us smart for it. May I look? Good—very good! a great improvement on last year—stronger, more knowledge in it. That hand wants study—but you will soon put it right. Ah, Velazquez! That a man should be great, one can bear that, but so great! It is an offence to the rest of us mortals. But one cannot realise him out of Madrid. I often sigh for the months I spent copying in the Museo. There is a repose of soul in copying a great master—don't you find it? One rests from one's own efforts awhile—the spirit of the master descends into yours, gently, profoundly.'

He stood beside her, smiling kindly, his hat and gloves in his hands, perfectly dressed, an air of the

great world about his look and bearing which differentiated him wholly from all other persons whom David had yet seen in Paris. In physique, too, he was totally unlike the ordinary Parisian type. He was a young athlete, vigorous, robust, broad-shouldered, tanned by sun and wind. Only his blue eye—so subtle, melancholy, passionate—revealed the artist and the thinker.

Elise was evidently transported by his notice of her. She talked to him eagerly of his pictures in the Salon, especially of a certain 'Salome,' which, as David presently gathered, was the sensation of the year. She raved about the qualities of it—the words, colour, poignancy, force recurring in the quick phrases.

'No one talks of your *success* now, Monsieur. It is another word. *C'est la gloire elle-même qui vous parle à l'oreille!*'

As she let fall the most characteristic of all French nouns, a slight tremor passed across the young man's face. But the look which succeeded it was one of melancholy; the blue eyes took a steely hardness.

'Perhaps a lying spirit, Mademoiselle. And what matter, so long as everything one does disappoints oneself? What a tyrant is art!—insatiable, adorable! You know it. We serve our king on our knees, and he deals us the most miserly gifts.'

'It is the service itself repays,' she said, eagerly, her chest heaving.

'True!—most true! But what a struggle always!—no rest—no content. And there is no other way. One must seek, grope, toil—then produce rapidly—in a flash—throw what you have done behind you—and so on to the next problem, and the next. There is no end to it—there never can be. But you hardly came here this morning, I imagine, Mademoiselle, to hear me prate! I wish you good day and good-bye.'

I came over for a look at the Salon, but to-morrow I go back to Spain. I can't breathe now for long away from my sun and my South! Adieu, Mademoiselle. I am told your prospects, when the voting comes on, are excellent. May the gods inspire the jury!'

He bowed, smiled, and passed on, carrying his lion-head and kingly presence down the gallery, which had now filled up again, and where, so David noticed, person after person turned as he came near with the same flash of recognition and pleasure he had seen upon Elise's face. A wild jealousy of the young conqueror invaded the English lad.

'Who is he?' he asked.

Elise, womanlike, divined him in a moment. She gave him a sidelong glance and went back to her painting.

'That,' she said quietly, 'is Henri Regnault. Ah, you know nothing of our painters. I can't make you understand. For me he is a young god—there is a halo round his head. He has grasped his fame—the fame we poor creatures are all thirsting for. It began last year with the Prim—General Prim on horseback—oh, magnificent!—a passion!—an energy! This year it is the "Salome." About—Gautier—all the world—have lost their heads over it. If you go to see it at the Salon, you will have to wait your turn. Crowds go every day for nothing else. Of course there are murmurs. They say the study of Fortuny has done him harm. Nonsense! People discuss him because he is becoming a master—no one discusses the nonentities. *They* have no enemies. Then he is sculptor, musician, athlete—well-born besides—all the world is his friend. But with it all so simple—*bon camarade* even for poor scrawlers like me. *Je l'adore!*'

'So it seems,' said David.

The girl smiled over her painting. But after a bit

she looked up with a seriousness, nay, a bitterness, in her siren's face, which astonished him.

'It is not amusing to take you in—you are too ignorant. What do you suppose Henri Regnault matters to me? His world is as far above mine as Velazquez' art is above my art. But how can a foreigner understand our shades and grades? Nothing but *success*, but *la gloire*, could ever lift me into his world. Then indeed I should be everybody's equal, and it would matter to nobody that I had been a Bohemian and a *déclassée*.'

She gave a little sigh of excitement, and threw her head back to look at her picture. David watched her.

'I thought,' he said ironically, 'that a few minutes ago you were all for Bohemia. I did not suspect these social ambitions.'

'All women have them—all artists deny them,' she said, recklessly. 'There, explain me as you like, Monsieur David. But don't read my riddle too soon, or I shall bore you. Allow me to ask you a question.'

She laid down her brushes and looked at him with the utmost gravity. His heart beat—he bent forward.

'Are you ever hungry, Monsieur David?'

He sprang up, half enraged, half ashamed.

'Where can we get some food?'

'That is my affair,' she said, putting up her brushes. 'Be humble, Monsieur, and take a lesson in Paris.'

And out they went together, he beside himself with the delight of accompanying her, and proudly carrying her box and satchel. How her little feet slipped in and out of her pretty dress—how, as they stood on the top of the great flight of stairs leading down into the court of the Louvre, the wind from outside blew back the curls from her brow, and ruffled the violets in her hat, the black lace about her tiny throat. It was an enchantment to follow and to serve her. She led

him through the Tuileries Gardens and the Place de la Concorde to the Champs-Élysées. The fountains leapt in the sun; the river blazed between the great white buildings of its banks; to the left was the gilded dome of the Invalides, and the mass of the Corps Législatif, while in front of them rose the long ascent to the Arc de l'Etoile set in vivid green on either hand. Everywhere was space, glitter, magnificence. The gaiety of Paris entered into the Englishman, and took possession.

Presently, as they wandered up the Champs-Élysées, they passed a great building to the left. Elise stopped and clasped her hands in front of her with a little nervous, spasmodic gesture.

'That,' she said, 'is the Salon. My fate lies there. When we have had some food, I will take you in to see.'

She led him a little further up the Avenue, then took him aside through cunningly devised labyrinths of green till they came upon a little café restaurant among the trees, where people sat under an awning, and the wind drove the spray of a little fountain hither and thither among the bushes. It was gay, foreign, romantic, unlike anything David had ever seen in his northern world. He sat down, with Barbier's stories running in his head. Mademoiselle Delaunay was George Sand—independent, gifted, on the road to fame like that great *déclassée* of old; and he was her friend and comrade, a humble soldier, a camp follower, in the great army of letters.

Their meal was of the lightest. This descent on the Champs-Élysées had been a freak on Elise's part, who wished to do nothing so *banal* as take her companion to the Palais Royal. But the restaurant she had chosen, though of a much humbler kind than those which the rich tourist commonly associates with this



part of Paris, was still a good deal more expensive than she had rashly supposed. She opened her eyes gravely at the charges; abused herself extravagantly for a lack of *savoir vivre*; and both with one accord declared it was too hot to eat. But upon such eggs and such green peas as they did allow themselves—a *portion* of each, scrupulously shared—David at any rate, in his traveller's ardour, was prepared to live to the end of the chapter.

Afterwards, over the coffee and the cigarettes, Elise taking her part in both, they lingered for one of those hours which make the glamour of youth. Confidences flowed fast between them. His French grew suppler and more docile, answered more truly to the individuality behind it. He told her of his bringing up, of his wandering with the sheep on the mountains, of his reading among the heather, of 'Lias and his visions, of Hannah's cruelties and Louie's tempers—that same idyll of peasant life to which Dora had listened months before. But how differently told! Each different listener changes the tale, readjusts the tone. But here also the tale pleased. Elise, for all her leanings towards new schools in art, had the Romantic's imagination and the Romantic's relish for things foreign and unaccustomed. The English boy and his story seemed to her both charming and original. Her artist's eye followed the lines of the ruffled black head and noted the red-brown of the skin. She felt a wish to draw him—a wish which had entirely vanished in the case of Louie.

'Your sister has taken a dislike to me,' she said to him once, coolly. 'And as for me, I am afraid of her. Ah! and she broke my glass!'

She shivered, and a look of anxiety and depression invaded her small face. He guessed that she was thinking of her pictures, and began timidly to speak to

her about them. When they returned to the world of art, his fluency left him; he felt crushed beneath the weight of his own ignorance and her accomplishment.

‘Come and see them!’ she said, springing up. ‘I am tired of my Infanta. Let her be awhile. Come to the Salon, and I will show you “Salome.” Or are you sick of pictures? What do you want to see? *Ça m’est égal*. I can always go back to my work.’

She spoke with a cavalier lightness which teased and piqued him.

‘I wish to go where you go,’ he said flushing, ‘to see what you see.’

She shook her little head.

‘No compliments, Monsieur David. We are serious persons, you and I. Well, then, for a couple of hours, *soyons camarades!*’

Of those hours, which prolonged themselves indefinitely, David’s after remembrance was somewhat crowded and indistinct. He could never indeed think of Regnault’s picture without a shudder, so poignant was the impression it made upon him under the stimulus of Elise’s nervous and passionate comments. It represented the daughter of Herodias resting after the dance, with the dish upon her knee which was to receive the head of the saint. Her mass of black hair—the first strong impression of the picture—stood out against the pale background, and framed the smiling sensual face, broadly and powerfully made, like the rest of the body, and knowing neither thought nor qualm. The colour was a bewilderment of scarlets and purples, of yellow and rose-colour, of turtle-greys and dazzling flesh-tints—bathed the whole of it in the searching light of the East. The strangeness, the science of it, its extraordinary brilliance and energy, combined with its total lack of all emotion, all pity,

took indelible hold of the English lad's untrained provincial sense. He dreamt of it for nights afterwards.

For the rest—what a whirl and confusion! He followed Elise through suffocating rooms, filled with the liveliest crowd he had ever seen. She was constantly greeted, surrounded, carried off to look at this and that. Her friends and acquaintances, indeed, whether men or women, seemed all to treat her in much the same way. There was complete, and often noisy, freedom of address and discussion between them. She called all the men by their surnames, and she was on half mocking, half caressing terms with the women, who seemed to David to be generally art students, of all ages and aspects. But nobody took any liberties with her. She had her place, and that one of some predominance. Clearly she had already the privileges of an eccentric, and a certain cool ascendancy of temperament. Her little figure fluttered hither and thither, gathering a train, then shaking it off again. Sometimes she and her friends, finding the heat intolerable, and wanting space for talk, would overflow into the great central hall, with its cool palms and statues; and there David would listen to torrents of French artistic theory, anecdote, and *blague*, till his head whirled, and French cleverness—conveyed to him in what, to the foreigner, is the most exquisite and the most tantalising of all tongues—seemed to him superhuman.

As to what he saw, after 'Salome,' he remembered vividly only three pictures—Elise Delaunay's two—a portrait and a workshop interior—before which he stood, lost in naïve wonder at her talent; and the head of a woman, with a thin pale face, reddish-brown hair, and a look of pantherish grace and force, which he was told was the portrait of an actress at the Odéon

who was making the world stare—Mademoiselle Bernhardt. For the rest he had the vague, distracting impression of a new world—of nude horrors and barbarities of all sorts—of things licentious or cruel, which yet, apparently, were all of as much value in the artist's eye, and to be discussed with as much calm or eagerness, as their neighbours. One moment he loathed what he saw, and threw himself upon his companion, with the half-coherent protests of an English idealism, of which she scarcely understood a word; the next he lost himself in some landscape which had torn the very heart out of an exquisite mood of nature, or in some scene of peasant life—so true and living that the scents of the fields and the cries of the animals were once more about him, and he lived his childhood over again.

Perhaps the main idea which the experience left with him was one of a goading and intoxicating *freedom*. His country lay in the background of his mind as the symbol of all dull convention and respectability. He was in the land of intelligence, where nothing is prejudged, and all experiments are open.

When they came out, it was to get an ice in the shade, and then to wander to and fro, watching the passers-by—the young men playing a strange game with disks under the trees—the nurses and children—the ladies in the carriages—and talking, with a quick, perpetual advance towards intimacy, towards emotion. More and more there grew upon her the charm of a certain rich poetic intelligence there was in him, stirring beneath his rawness and ignorance, struggling through the fetters of language; and in response, as the evening wore on, she threw off her professional airs, and sank the egotist out of sight. She became simpler, more childish; her variable, fanciful youth answered to the magnetism of his.

At last he said to her, as they stood by the Arc de l'Etoile, looking down towards Paris:

'The sun is just going down—this day has been the happiest of my life!'

The low intensity of the tone startled her. Then she had a movement of caprice, of superstition.

'*Alors—assez!* Monsieur David, stay where you are. Not another step!—*Adieu!*'

Astonished and dismayed, he turned involuntarily. But, in the crowd of people passing through the Arch, she had slipped from him, and he had lost her beyond recovery. Moreover, her tone was peremptory—he dared not pursue and anger her.

Minutes passed while he stood, spell- and trance-bound, in the shadow of the Arch. Then, with the long and labouring breath, the sudden fatigue of one who has leapt in a day from one plane of life to another—in whom a passionate and continuous heat of feeling has for the time burnt up the nervous power—he moved on eastwards, down the Champs-Élysées. The sunset was behind him, and the trees threw long shadows across his path. Shade and sun spaces alike seemed to him full of happy crowds. The beautiful city laughed and murmured round him. Nature and man alike bore witness with his own rash heart that all is divinely well with the world—let the cynics and the mourners say what they will. His hour had come, and without a hesitation or a dread he rushed upon it. Passion and youth—ignorance and desire—have never met in madder or more reckless dreams than those which filled the mind of David Grieve as he wandered blindly home.

## CHAPTER V

As David climbed the garret stairs to his room, the thought of Louie flashed across his mind for the first time since the morning. He opened the door and looked round. Yes; all her things were gone. She had taken up her abode with the Cervins.

A certain anxiety and discomfort seized him; before going out to the Boulevard to snatch some food in preparation for his evening at the 'Trois Rats' he descended to the landing below and rang the Cervins' bell.

A charwoman, dirty and tired with much cleaning, opened to him.

No, Madame was not at home. No one was at home, and the dinner was spoiling. Had they not been seen all day? Certainly. They had come in about six o'clock *avec une jeune personne* and M. Montjoie. She thought it probable that they were all at that moment down below, in the studio of M. Montjoie.

David already knew his way thither, and was soon standing outside the high black door with the pane of glass above it to which Madame Merichat had originally directed him. While he waited for an answer to his ring he looked about him. He was in a sort of yard which was almost entirely filled up by the sculptor's studio, a long structure lighted at one end as it seemed from the roof, and at the other by the usual north window. At the end of the yard rose a huge many-storied building which seemed to be a factory of some sort. David's Lancashire eye distinguished machinery through the monotonous windows, and the figures of the operatives; it took note also of the fact that the rooms were lit up and work still going on at seven o'clock. All around were the ugly backs of

tall houses, every window flung open to this May heat. The scene was squalid and *triste* save for the greenish blue of the evening sky, and the flight of a few pigeons round the roof of the factory.

A man in a blouse came at last, and led the way in when David asked for Madame Cervin. They passed through the inner studio full of a confusion of clay models and casts to which the dust of months gave the look and relief of bronze.

Then the further door opened, and he saw beyond a larger and emptier room; sculptor's work of different kinds, and in various stages on either side; casts, and charcoal studies on the walls, and some dozen people scattered in groups over the floor, all looking towards an object on which the fading light from the upper part of the large window at the end was concentrated.

What was that figure on its pedestal, that white image which lived and breathed? *Louie?*

The brother stood amazed beside the door, staring while the man in the blouse retreated, and the persons in the room were too much occupied with the spectacle before them to notice the new-comer's arrival.

Louie stood upon a low pedestal, which apparently revolved with the model, for as David entered, Montjoie, the man in the grey suit, with the square, massive head, who had joined the party in the Louvre, ran forward and moved it round slightly. She was in Greek dress, and some yards away from her was the clay study—a mænad with vine wreath, tambourine, thyrsus, and floating hair—for which she was posing.

Even David was dazzled by the image thus thrown out before him. With her own dress Louie Grieve seemed to have laid aside for the moment whatever common or provincial elements there might be in her strange and startling beauty. Clothed in the clinging

folds of the Greek chiton; neck, arms, and feet bare; the rounded forms of the limbs showing under the soft stuff; the face almost in profile, leaning to the shoulder, as though the delicate ear were listening for the steps of the wine god; a wreath of vine leaves round the black hair which fell in curly masses about her, sharpening and framing the rosy whiteness of the cheek and neck; one hand lightly turned back behind her, showing the palm, the other holding a torch; one foot poised on tiptoe, and the whole body lightly bent forward, as though for instant motion:—in this dress and this attitude, worn and sustained with extraordinary intelligence and audacity, the wild hybrid creature had risen as it were, for the first time, to the full capacity of her endowment—had eclipsed and yet revealed herself.

The brother stood speechless, looking from the half-completed study to his sister. How had they made her understand?—where had she got the dress? And such a dress! To the young fellow, who in his peasant and tradesman experience had never even seen a woman in the ordinary low dress of society, it seemed incredible, outrageous. And to put it on for the purpose of posing as a model in a room full of strange men—Madame Cervin was the only woman present—his cheek burnt for his sister; and for the moment indignation and bewilderment held him paralysed.

In front of him a little way, but totally unaware of the stranger's entrance, were two men whispering and laughing together. One held a piece of paper on a book, and was making a hurried sketch of Louie. Every now and then he drew the attention of his companion to some of the points of the model. David caught a careless phrase or two, and understood just enough of their student's slang to suspect a good deal worse than was actually said.



Meanwhile Montjoie was standing against an iron pillar, studying intently every detail of Louie's pose, both hands arched over his eyes.

'*Peste!* did one ever see so many points combined?' he threw back to a couple of men behind him. 'Too thin—the arms might be better—and the hands a *little* common. But for the *ensemble—mon Dieu!* we should make Carpeaux's *atelier* look alive—*hein?*'

'Take care!' laughed a man who was leaning against a cast a few feet away, and smoking vigorously.

'She likes it, she has never done it before, but she likes it. Suppose Carpeaux gets hold of her. You may repent showing her, if you want to keep her to yourself.'

'Ah, that right knee wants throwing forward a trifle,' said Montjoie in a preoccupied tone, and going up to Louie, he spoke a few words of bad English.

'Allow me, mademoiselle—put your hand on me—*ainsi*—vile I change dis pretty foot.'

Louie looked down bewildered, then at the other men about her, with her great eyes, half exultant, half inquiring. She understood hardly anything of their French. One of them laughed, and, running to the clay Mænad, stooped down and touched the knee and ankle, to show her what was meant. Louie instinctively put her hand on Montjoie's shoulder to steady herself, and he proceeded to move the bare sandalled foot.

One of the men near him made a remark which David caught. He suddenly strode forward.

'Sir! Have the goodness to tell me how you wish my sister to stand, and I will explain to her. She is not your model!'

The sculptor looked up startled. Everybody stared at the intruder, at the dark English boy, standing with a threatening eye, and trembling with anger,

beside his sister. Then Madame Cervin, clasping her little fat hands with an exclamation of dismay, rushed up to the group, while Louie leapt down from her pedestal and went to David.

'What are you interfering for?' she said, pushing Madame Cervin aside and looking him full in the eyes, her own blazing, her chest heaving.

'You are disgracing yourself,' he said to her with the same intensity, fast and low, under his breath, so as to be heard only by her. 'How can you expose yourself as a model to these men whom you never saw before? Let them find their own models; they are a pack of brutes!'

But even as he spoke he shrank before the concentrated wrath of her face.

'I will make you pay for it!' she said. 'I will teach you to domineer.'

Then she turned to Madame Cervin.

'Come and take it off, please!' she said imperiously. 'It's no good while he is here.'

As she crossed the room with her free wild step, her white draperies floating, Montjoie, who had been standing pulling at his moustaches, and studying the brother from under his heavy brows, joined her, and, stooping, said two or three smiling words in her ear. She looked up, tossed her head and laughed—a laugh half reckless, half *farouche*; two or three of the other men hurried after them, and presently they made a knot in the further room, Louie calmly waiting for Madame Cervin, and sitting on the pedestal of a bronze group, her beautiful head and white shoulders thrown out against the metal. Montjoie's artist friends—of the kind which haunt a man whose *mœurs* are gradually bringing his talent to ruin—stood round her, smoking and talking and staring at the English girl between whiles. The arrogance with which she

bore their notice excited them, but they could not talk to her, for she did not understand them. Only Montjoie had a few words of English. Occasionally Louie bent forward and looked disdainfully through the door. When would David be done prating?

For he, in fact, was grappling with Madame Cervin, who was showing great adroitness. This was what had happened according to her. Monsieur Montjoie—a man of astonishing talent, an artist altogether superior—was in trouble about his statue—could not find a model to suit him—was in despair. It seemed that he had heard of mademoiselle's beauty from England, in some way before she arrived. Then in the studio he had shown her the Greek dress.

‘—There were some words between them—some compliments, Monsieur, I suppose—and your sister said she would pose for him. I opposed myself. I knew well that mademoiselle was a young person *tout-à-fait comme il faut*, that monsieur her brother might object to her making herself a model for M. Montjoie. *Mais, mon Dieu!*’ and the ex-modiste shrugged her round shoulders—‘mademoiselle has a will of her own.’

Then she hinted that in an hour's acquaintance mademoiselle had already shown herself extremely difficult to manage—monsieur would probably understand that. As for her, she had done everything possible. She had taken mademoiselle upstairs and dressed her with her own hands—she had been her maid and companion throughout. She could do no more. Mademoiselle would go her own way.

‘Who were all these men?’ David inquired, still hot and frowning.

Madame Cervin rose on tiptoe and poured a series of voluble biographies into his ear. According to her everybody present was a person of distinction; was at

any rate an artist, and a man of talent. But let monsieur decide. If he was dissatisfied, let him take his sister away. She had been distressed, insulted, by his behaviour. Mademoiselle's box had been not yet unpacked. Let him say the word and it should be taken upstairs again.

And she drew away from him, bridling, striking an attitude of outraged dignity beside her husband, who had stood behind her in a slouching abstracted silence during the whole scene—so far as her dwarf stature and vulgar little moon-face permitted.

'We are strangers here, Madame,' cried David. 'I asked you to take care of my sister, and I find her like this, before a crowd of men neither she nor I have ever seen before!'

Madame Cervin swept her hand grandiloquently round.

'Monsieur has his remedy! Let him take his sister.'

He stood silent in a helpless and obvious perplexity. What, saddle himself afresh after these intoxicating hours of liberty and happiness? Fetter and embarrass every moment? Shut himself out from freedom—from *her*?

Besides, already his first instinctive rage was disappearing. In the confusion of this new world he could no longer tell whether he was right or ridiculous. Had he been playing the Philistine, mistaking a mere artistic convention for an outrage? And Louie was so likely to submit to his admonitions!

Madame Cervin watched him with a triumphant eye. When he began to stammer out what was in effect an apology, she improved the opportunity, threw off her suave manners, and let him understand with a certain plain brutality that she had taken Louie's measure. She would do her best to keep the girl in

order—it was lucky for him that he had fallen upon anybody so entirely respectable as herself and her husband—but she would use her own judgment; and if monsieur made scenes, she would just turn out her boarder, and leave him to manage as he could.

She had the whip-hand, and she knew it. He tried to appease her, then discovered that he must go, and went with a hanging head.

Louie took no notice of him nor he of her, as he passed through the inner studio, but Montjoie came forward to meet the English lad, bending his great head and shoulders with a half-ironic politeness. Monsieur Grieve he feared had mistaken the homage rendered by himself and his friends to his sister's beauty for an act of disrespect—let him be reassured! Such beauty was its own defence. No doubt monsieur did not understand artistic usage. He, Montjoie, made allowance for the fact, otherwise the young man's behaviour towards himself and his friends would have required explanation.

The two stood together at the door—David proudly crimson, seeking in vain for phrases that would not come—Montjoie cool and malicious, his battered weather-beaten face traversed by little smiles. Louie was looking on with scornful amusement, and the group of artists round her could hardly control their mirth.

He shut the door behind him with the feeling of one who has cut a ridiculous figure and beaten a mean retreat. Then, as he neared the bottom of the stairs, he gave himself a great shake, with the gesture of one violently throwing off a weight. Let those who thought that he ought to control Louie, and could control her, come and see for themselves! He had done what he thought was for the best—his quick inner sense carefully refrained from attaching any

blame whatever to Mademoiselle Delaunay—and now Louie must go her own gait, and he would go his. He had said his say—and she should not spoil this hoarded, this long-looked-for pleasure. As he passed into the street, on his way to the Boulevard for some food, his walk and bearing had in them a stern and passionate energy.

He had to hurry back for his appointment with Mademoiselle Delaunay's friends of the morning. As he turned into the Rue Chantal he passed a flower-stall aglow with roses from the south and sweet with narcissus and mignonette. An idea struck him, and he stopped, a happy smile softening away the still lingering tension of the face. For a few sous he bought a bunch of yellow-eyed narcissus and stepped gaily home with them. He had hardly time to put them in water and to notice that Madame Merichat had made Dubois' squalid abode look much more habitable than before, when there was a knock at the door and his two guides stood outside.

They carried him off at once. David found more of a tongue than he had been master of in the morning, and the three talked incessantly as they wound in and out of the streets which cover the face of the hill of Montmartre, ascending gradually towards the place they were in search of. David had heard something of the history of the two from Elise Delaunay. Alphonse was a lad of nineteen brimming over with wild fun and mischief, and perpetually in disgrace with all possible authorities; the possessor nevertheless of a certain delicate and subtle fancy which came out in the impressionist landscapes—many of them touched with a wild melancholy as inexplicable probably to himself as to other people—which he painted in all his spare moments. The tall black-bearded

Lenain was older, had been for years in Taranne's *atelier*, was an excellent draughtsman, and was now just beginning seriously upon the painting of large pictures for exhibition. In his thin long face there was a pinched and anxious look, as though in the artist's inmost mind there lay hidden the presentiment of failure.

They talked freely enough of Elise Delaunay, David alternately wincing and craving for more. What a clever little devil it was! She was burning herself away with ambition and work; Taranne flattered her a good deal; it was absolutely necessary, otherwise she would be for killing herself two or three times a week.

Oh! she might get her *mention* at the Salon. The young Solons sitting in judgment on her thought on the whole she deserved it; two of her exhibits were not bad; but there was another girl in the *atelier*, Mademoiselle Bréal, who had more interest in high places. However, Taranne would do what he could; he had always made a favourite of the little Elise; and only he could manage her when she was in one of her impracticable fits.

Then Alphonse put the Englishman through a catechism, and at the end of it they both advised him not to trouble his head about George Sand. That was all dead and done with, and Balzac not much less. He might be great, Balzac, but who could be at the trouble of reading him nowadays? Lenain, who was literary, named to him with enthusiasm Flaubert's 'Madame Bovary' and the brothers Goncourt. As for Alphonse, who was capable, however, of occasional excursions into poetry, and could quote Musset and Hugo, the *feuilletons* in the 'Gaulois' or the 'Figaro' seemed, on the whole, to provide him with as much fiction as he desired. He was emphatically of opinion that the

artist wants no books; a little poetry, perhaps, did no harm; but literature in painting was the very devil. Then perceiving that between them they had puzzled their man, Alphonse would have proceeded to 'cram' him in the most approved style, but that Lenain interposed, and a certain cooling of the Englishman's bright eye made success look unpromising. Finally the wild fellow clapped David on the back and assured him that 'Les Trois Rats' would astonish him. 'Ah! here we are.'

As he spoke they turned a corner, and a blaze of light burst upon them, coming from what seemed to be a gap in the street face, a house whereof the two lower stories were wall- and windowless, though not in the manner of the ordinary café, seeing that the open parts were raised somewhat above the pavement.

'The patron saint!' said Alphonse, stopping with a grin and pointing. Following the finger with his eye David caught a fantastic sign swinging above him: a thin iron crescent, and sitting up between its two tips a lean black rat, its sharp nose in the air, its tail curled round its iron perch, while two other creatures of the same kind crept about him, the one clinging to the lower tip of the crescent, the other peering down from the top on the king-rat in the middle. Below the sign, and heavily framed by the dark overhanging eave, the room within was clearly visible from the street. From the background of its black oak walls and furniture emerged figures, lights, pictures, above all an imposing *cheminée* advancing far into the floor, a high, fantastic structure also of black oak like the panelling of the room, but overrun with chains of black rats, carved and combined with a wild *diablerie*, and lit by numerous lights in branching ironwork. The dim grotesque shapes of the pictures, the ges-



ticulating, shouting crowd in front of them, the mediævalism of the room and of that strange sign dangling outside: these things took the English lad's excited fancy and he pressed his way in behind his companions. He forgot what they had been telling him; his pulse beat to the old romantic tune; poets, artists, talkers—here he was to find them.

David's two companions exchanged greetings on all sides, laughing and shouting like the rest. With difficulty they found a table in a remote corner, and, sitting down, ordered coffee.

'Alphonse! *mon cher!*'

A young man sitting at the next table turned round upon them, slapped Alphonse on the shoulder, and stared hard at David. He had fine black eyes in a bronzed face, a silky black beard, and long hair *à la lion*, that is to say, thrown to one side of the head in a loose mane-like mass.

'I have just come from the Salon. Not bad—Regnault? *Hein?*'

'*Non—il arrivera, celui-là,*' said the other calmly.

'As for the other things from the Villa Medici fellows,' said the first speaker, throwing his arm round the back of his chair, and twisting it round so as to front them, 'they make me sick. I should hardly do my fire the injustice of lighting it with some of them.'

'All the same,' replied Alphonse stoutly, 'that Campagna scene of D.'s is well done.'

'Literature, *mon cher!* literature!' cried the unknown, 'and what the deuce do we want with literature in painting?'

He brought his fist down violently on the table.

'*Connu,*' said Alphonse scornfully. 'Don't excite yourself. But the story in D.'s picture doesn't matter a halfpenny. Who cares what the figures are doing? It's the brushwork and the values I look to.'

How did he get all that relief—that brilliance? No sunshine—no local colour—and the thing glows like a Rembrandt!’

The boy’s mad blue eyes took a curious light, as though some inner enthusiasm had stirred.

‘*Peuh!* we all know you, Alphonse. Say what you like, you want something else in a picture than painting. That’ll damn you, and make your fortune some day, I warn you. Now *I* have got a picture on the easel that will make the *bourgeois* skip.’

And the speaker passed a large tremulous hand through his waves of hair, his lip also quivering with the nervousness of a man overworked and overdone.

‘You’ll not send it to the Salon, I imagine,’ said another man beside him, dryly. He was fair, small and clean-shaven, wore spectacles, and had the look of a clerk or man of business.

‘Yes, I shall!’ cried the other violently—his name was Dumesnil—‘I’ll fling it at their heads. That’s all our school can do—make a scandal.’

‘Well, that has even been known to make money,’ said the other, fingering his watch-chain with a disagreeable little smile.

‘Money!’ shouted Dumesnil, and swinging round to his own table again he poured out hot denunciations of the money-grabbing reptiles of to-day who shelter themselves behind the sacred name of art. Meanwhile the man at whom it was all levelled sipped his coffee quietly and took no notice.

‘Ah, a song!’ cried Alphonse. ‘*Lénain, vois-tu?* It’s that little devil Perinot. He’s been painting churches down near Toulouse, his own country. Saints by the dozen, like this,’ and Alphonse drooped his eyes and crossed his limp hands, taking off the frescoed mediæval saint for an instant, as only the Parisian *gamin* can do such things. ‘You should see him with

a *curé*. However, the *curés* don't follow him here, more's the pity. Ah! *très bien—très bien!*'

These plaudits were called out by some passages on the guitar with which the singer was prefacing his song. His chair had been mounted on to a table, so that all the world could see and hear. A hush of delighted attention penetrated the room; and outside, in the street, David could see dark forms gathering on the pavement.

The singer was a young man, undersized and slightly deformed, with close-cut hair, and a large face, droll, pliant and ugly as a gutta-percha mask. Before he opened his lips the audience laughed.

David listened with all his ears, feeling through every fibre the piquant strangeness of the scene—alive with the foreigner's curiosity, and with youth's pleasure in mere novelty. And what clever fellows, what dash, what *camaraderie*! That old imaginative drawing towards France and the French was becoming something eagerly personal, combative almost,—and in the background of his mind throughout was the vibrating memory of the day just past—the passionate sense of a new life.

The song was tumultuously successful. The whole crowded *salle*, while it was going on, was one sea of upturned faces, and it was accompanied at intervals by thunders of applause, given out by means of sticks, spoons, fists, or anything else that might come handy.

It recounted the adventures of an artist and his model. As it proceeded, a slow crimson rose into the English lad's cheek, overspread his forehead and neck. He sat staring at the singer, or looking round at the absorbed attention and delight of his companions. By the end of it David, his face propped on his hands, was trying nervously to decipher the names and devices cut in the wood of the table on which he leant. His

whole being was in a surge of physical loathing—the revulsion of feeling was bewildering and complete. So this was what Frenchmen thought of women, what they could say of them, when the mask was off, and they were at their ease. The witty brutality, the naked hoarseness of the thing scourged the boy's shrinking sense. Freedom, passion—yes! but *this*! In his wild recoil he stood again under the Arc de Triomphe watching her figure disappear. Ah! pardon! That he should be listening at all seemed to a conscience, an imagination quickened by first love, to be an outrage to women, to love, to her!

Yet—how amusing it was! how irresistible, as the first shock subsided, was the impression of sparkling verse, of an astonishing mimetic gift in the singer! Towards the end he had just made up his mind to go on the first pretext, when he found himself, to his own disgust, shaking with laughter.

He recovered himself after a while, resolved to stay it out, and betrayed nothing. The comments made by his two companions on the song—consisting mainly of illustrative anecdote—were worthy of the occasion. David sat, however, without flinching, his black eyes hardening, laughing at intervals.

Presently the room rose *en bloc*, and there was a move towards the staircase.

'The manager, M. Edmond, has come,' explained Alphonse; 'they are going upstairs to the concert-room. They will have a recitation perhaps,—*ombres chinoises*—music. Come and look at the drawings before we go.'

And he took his charge round the walls, which were papered with drawings and sketches, laughing and explaining. The drawings were done, in the main, according to him, by the artists on the staffs of two illustrated papers which had their headquarters at the

'Trois Rats.' David was especially seized by the innumerable sheets of animal sketches—series in which some episode of animal life was carried through from its beginning to a close, sometimes humorous, but more often tragic. In a certain number of them there was a free imagination, an irony, a pity, which linked them together, marked them as the conceptions of one brain. Alphonse pointed to them as the work of a clever fellow, lately dead, who had been launched and supported by the 'Trois Rats' and its frequenters. One series in particular, representing a robin overcome by the seduction of a glass of absinthe and passing through all the stages of delirium tremens, had a grim inventiveness, a fecundity of half humorous, half pathetic fancy, which held David's eye riveted.

As for the ballet-girl, she was everywhere, with her sisters, the model and the *grisette*. And the artistic ability shown in the treatment of her had nowhere been hampered by any Philistine scruple in behalf of decency.

Upstairs there was the same mixed experience. David found himself in a corner with his two acquaintances, and four or five others, a couple of journalists, a musician and a sculptor. The conversation ranged from art to religion, from religion to style, from style to women, and all with a perpetual recurrence either to the pictures and successes of the Salon, or to the *liaisons* of well-known artists.

'Why do none of us fellows in the press pluck up courage and tell H. what we really think about those Homeric *machines* of his which he turns out year after year?' said a journalist, who was smoking beside him, an older man than the rest of them. 'I have a hundred things I want to say—but H. is popular—I like him himself—and I haven't the nerve. But what the devil do we want with the Greeks—they painted their

world—let us paint ours! Besides, it is an absurdity. I thought as I was looking at H.'s things this morning of what Préault used to say of Pradier: "*Il partait tous les matins pour la Grèce et arrivait tous les soirs Rue de Bréda.*" Pose your goddesses as you please—they are *grisettes* all the same.'

'All very well for you critics,' growled a man smoking a long pipe beside him; 'but the artist must live, and the *bourgeois* will have subjects. He won't have anything to do with your "notes"—and "impressions"—and "arrangements." When you present him with the view, served hot, from your four-pair back—he buttons up his pockets and abuses you. He wants his stories and his sentiment. And where the deuce is the sentiment to be got? I should be greatly obliged to anyone who would point me to a little of the commodity. The Greeks are already ridiculous,—and as for religion——'

The speaker threw back his head and laughed silently.

'Ah! I agree with you,' said the other emphatically; 'the religious pictures this year are really too bad. Christianity is going too fast—for the artist.'

'And the sceptics are becoming bores,' cried the painter; 'they take themselves too seriously. It is, after all, only another dogmatism. One should believe in nothing—not even in one's doubts.'

'Yes,' replied the journalist, knocking out his pipe, with a sardonic little smile—'strange fact! One may swim in free thought and remain as *banal* as a bishop all the time.'

'I say,' shouted a fair-haired youth opposite, 'who has seen C.'s Holy Family? Who knows where he got his Madonna?'

Nobody knew, and the speaker had the felicity of imparting an entirely fresh scandal to attentive ears.

The mixture in the story of certain brutalities of modern manners with names and things still touching or sacred for the mass of mankind had the old Voltairean flavour. But somehow, presented in this form and at this moment, David no longer found it attractive. He sat nursing his knee, his dark brows drawn together, studying the story-teller, whose florid Norman complexion and blue eyes were already seared by a vicious experience.

The tale, however, was interrupted and silenced by the first notes of a piano. The room was now full, and a young actor from the Gymnase company was about to give a musical sketch. The subject of it was 'St. Francis and Santa Clara.'

This performance was perhaps more wittily broad than anything which had gone before. The audience was excessively amused by it. It was indeed the triumph of the evening, and nothing could exceed the grace and point of the little speech in which M. Edmond, the manager of the café, thanked the accomplished singer afterwards.

While it was going on, David, always with that poignant, shrinking thought of Elise at his heart, looked round to see if there were any women present. Yes, there were three. Two were young, outrageously dressed, with sickly pretty tired faces. The third was a woman in middle life, with short hair parted at the side, and a strong, masculine air. Her dress was as nearly as possible that of a man, and she was smoking vigorously. The rough *bonhomie* of her expression and her professional air reminded David once more of George Sand. An artist, he supposed, or a writer.

Suddenly, towards the end of the sketch, he became conscious of a tall figure behind the singer, a man standing with his hat in his hand, as though he had

just come in, and were just going away. His fine head was thrown back, his look was calm, David thought disdainful. Bending forward he recognised M. Regnault, the hero of the morning.

Regnault had come in unperceived while the dramatic piece was going on; but it was no sooner over than he was discovered, and the whole *salle* rose to do him honour. The generosity, the extravagance of the ovation offered to the young painter by this hundred or two of artists and men of letters were very striking to the foreign eye. David found himself thrilling and applauding with the rest. The room had passed in an instant from cynicism to sentiment. A moment ago it had been trampling to mud the tenderest feeling of the past; it was now eagerly alive with the feeling of the present.

The new-comer protested that he had only dropped in, being in the neighbourhood, and must not stay. He was charming to them all, asked after this man's picture and that man's statue, talked a little about the studio he was organising at Tangiers, and then, shaking hands right and left, made his way through the crowd.

As he passed David, his quick eye caught the stranger and he paused.

'Were you not in the Louvre this morning with Mademoiselle Delaunay?' he asked, lowering his voice a little; 'you are a stranger?'

'Yes, an Englishman,' David stammered, taken by surprise. Regnault's look swept over the youth's face, kindling in an instant with the artist's delight in beautiful line and tint.

'Are you going now?'

'Yes,' said David hurriedly. 'It must be late?'

'Midnight, past. May I walk with you?'

David, overwhelmed, made some hurried excuses to



his two companions, and found himself pushing his way to the door, an unnoticed figure in the tumult of Regnault's exit.

When they got into the street outside, Regnault walked fast southwards for a minute or so without speaking. Then he stopped abruptly, with the gesture of one shaking off a weight.

'Pah! this Paris chokes me.'

Then, walking on again, he said, half-coherently, and to himself:

'So vile,—so small,—so foul! And there are such great things in the world. *Beasts!*—*pigs!*—and yet so generous, so struggling, such a hard fight for it. So gifted,—many of them! What are you here for?'

And he turned round suddenly upon his companion. David, touched and captured he knew not how by the largeness and spell of the man's presence, conquered his shyness and explained himself as intelligibly as he could:

An English bookseller, making his way in trade, yet drawn to France by love for her literature and her past, and by a blood-tie which seemed to have in it mystery and pain, for it could hardly be spoken of—the curious little story took the artist's fancy.

Regnault did his best to draw out more of it, helped the young fellow with his French, tried to get at his impressions, and clearly enjoyed the experience to which his seeking artist's sense had led him.

'What a night!' he said at last, drawing a full draught of the May into his great chest. 'Stop and look down those streets in the moonlight. What surfaces,—what gradations,—what a beauty of multiplied lines, though it is only a piece of vulgar Haussmann! Indoors I can't breathe—but out of doors and at night this Paris of ours,—ah! she is still beautiful—*beautiful!* Now one has shaken the dust of that place off,

one can feel it. What did you think of it?—tell me.'

He stooped and looked into his companion's face. David was tall and lithe, but Regnault was at least half a head taller and broader in proportion.

David walked along for a minute without answering. He too, and even more keenly than Regnault, was conscious of escape and relief. A force which had, as it were, taken life and feeling by the throat had relaxed its grip. He disengaged himself with mingled loathing and joy. But in his shyness he did not know how to express himself, fearing, too, to wound the Frenchman. At last he said slowly:

'I never saw so many clever people together in my life.'

The words were bald, but Regnault perfectly understood what was meant by them, as well as by the troubled consciousness of the black eyes raised to his. He laughed—shortly and bitterly.

'No, we don't lack brains, we French. All the same I tell you, in the whole of that room there are about half-a-dozen people,—oh, not so many!—not nearly so many!—who will ever make a mark, even for their own generation, who will ever strike anything out of nature that is worth having—wrestle with her to any purpose. Why? Because they have every sort of capacity—every sort of cleverness—and *no character!*'

David walked beside him in silence. He thought suddenly of Regnault's own picture—its strange cruelty and force, its craftsman's brilliance. And the recollection puzzled him.

Regnault, however, had spoken with passion, and as though out of the fulness of some sore and long-familiar pondering.

'You never saw anything like that in England,' he resumed quickly.

David hesitated.

'No, I never did. But I am a provincial, and I have seen nothing at all. Perhaps in London——'

'No, you would see nothing like it in London,' said Regnault decidedly. 'Bah! it is not that you are more virtuous than we are. Who believes such folly? But your vice is grosser, stupider. Lucky for you! You don't sacrifice to it the best young brain of the nation, as we are perpetually doing. Ah, *mon Dieu!*' he broke out in a kind of despair, 'this enigma of art!—of the artist! One flounders and blunders along. I have been floundering and blundering with the rest,—playing tricks—following this man and that—till suddenly—a door opens—and one sees the real world through for the first time!'

He stood still in his excitement, a smile of the most exquisite quality and sweetness dawning on his strong young face.

'And then,' he went on, beginning to walk again, and talking much more to the night than to his companion, 'one learns that the secret of life lies in *feeling*—in the heart, not in the head. And no more limits than before!—all is still open, divinely open. Range the whole world—see everything, learn everything—till at the end of years and years you may perhaps be found worthy to be called an artist! But let art have her ends, all the while, shining beyond the means she is toiling through—her ends of beauty or of power. To spend herself on the mere photography of the vile and the hideous! what waste—what sacrilege!'

They had reached the Place de la Concorde, which lay bathed in moonlight, the silver fountains plashing, the trees in the Champs-Élysées throwing their sharp yet delicate shadows on the intense whiteness of the ground, the buildings far away rising softly into the softest purest blue. Regnault stopped and looked

round him with enchantment. As for David, he had no eyes save for his companion. His face was full of a quick responsive emotion. After an experience which had besmirched every ideal and bemocked every faith, the young Frenchman's talk had carried the lad once more into the full tide of poetry and romance. 'The secret of life lies in *feeling*, in the heart, not the head'—ah, *that* he understood! He tried to express his assent, his homage to the speaker; but neither he nor the artist understood very clearly what he was saying. Presently Regnault said in another tone: '

'And they are such good fellows, many of them. Starving often—but nothing to propitiate the *bourgeois*, nothing to compromise the "dignity of art." A man will paint to please himself all day, paint, on a crust, something that won't and can't sell, that the world in fact would be mad to buy; then in the evening he will put his canvas to the wall, and paint sleeve-links or china to live. And so generous to each other: they will give each other all they have—food, clothes, money, knowledge. That man who gave that abominable thing about St. Francis—I know him, he has a little apartment near the Quai St.-Michel, and an invalid mother. He is a perfect angel to her. I could take off my hat to him whenever I think of it.'

His voice dropped again. Regnault was pacing along across the Place, his arms behind him, David at his side. When he resumed, it was once more in a tone of despondency.

'There is an ideal; but so twisted, so corrupted! What is wanted is not less intelligence but *more*—more knowledge, more experience—something beyond this fevering, brutalising Paris, which is all these men know. They have got the poison of the Boulevards in their blood, and it dulls their eye and hand. They want scattering to the wilderness; they want the wave

of life to come and lift them past the mud they are dabbling in, with its hideous wrecks and *débris*, out and away to the great sea, to the infinite beyond of experience and feeling! you, too, feel with me?—you, too, see it like that? Ah! when one has seen and felt Italy—the East,—the South—lived heart to heart with a wild nature, or with the great embodied thought of the past,—lived at large, among great things, great sights, great emotions, then there comes purification! There is no other way out—no, none!’

So for another hour Regnault led the English boy up and down and along the quays, talking in the frankest openest way to this acquaintance of a night. It was as though he were wrestling his own way through his own life-problem. Very often David could hardly follow. The joys, the passions, the temptations of the artist, struggling with the life of thought and aspiration, the craving to know everything, to feel everything, at war with the hunger for a moral unity and a stainless self-respect—there was all this in his troubled, discursive talk, and there was besides the magic touch of genius, youth, and poetry.

‘Well, this is strange!’ he said at last, stopping at a point between the Louvre on the one hand and the Institute on the other, the moonlit river lying between.—‘My friends come to me at Rome or at Tangiers, and they complain of me, “Regnault, you have grown morose, no one can get a word out of you”—and they go away wounded—I have seen it often. And it was always true. For months I have had no words. I have been in the dark, wrestling with my art and with this goading, torturing world, which the artist with his puny forces has somehow to tame and render. Then—the other day—ah! well, no matter!—but the dark broke, and there was light! and when I saw your face, your stranger’s face, in that crowd

to-night, listening to those things, it drew me. I wanted to say my say. I don't make excuses. Very likely we shall never meet again—but for this hour we have been friends. Good night!—good night! Look,—the dawn is coming!'

And he pointed to where, behind the towers of Notre-Dame, the first whiteness of the coming day was rising into the starry blue.

They shook hands.

'You go back to England soon?'

'In a—a—week or two.'

'Only believe this—we have things better worth seeing than—"Les Trois Rats"—things that represent us better. That is what the foreigner is always doing; he spends his time in wondering at our monkey tricks; there is no nation can do them so well as we; and the great France—the undying France!—disappears in a splutter of *blague*!'

He leant over the parapet, forgetting his companion, his eyes fixed on the great cathedral, on the slender shaft of the Sainte Chapelle, on the sky filling with light.

Then suddenly he turned round, laid a quick hand on his companion's shoulder.

'If you ever feel inclined to write to me, the *École des Beaux-Arts* will find me. Adieu.'

And drawing his coat round him in the chilliness of the dawn, he walked off quickly across the bridge.

David also hurried away, speeding along the deserted pavements till again he was in his own dark street. The dawn was growing from its first moment of mysterious beauty into a grey disillusioning light. But he felt no reaction. He crept up the squalid stairs to his room. It was heavy with the scent of the narcissus.

He took them, and stole along the passage to Elise's

door. There were three steps outside it. He sat down on the lowest, putting his flowers beside him. There was something awful to him even in this nearness; he dare not have gone higher.

He sat there for long—his heart beating, beating. Every part of his French experience so far, whether by sympathy or recoil, had helped to bring him to this intoxication of sense and soul. Regnault had spoken of the 'great things' of life. Had he too come to understand them—thus?

At last he left his flowers there, kissing the step on which they were laid, and which her foot must touch. He could hardly sleep; the slight fragrance which clung to the old bearskin in which he wrapt himself helped to keep him restless; it was the faint heliotrope scent he had noticed in her room.

## CHAPTER VI

'HE loves me—he does really! Poor boy!'

The speaker was Elise Delaunay. She was sitting alone on the divan in her *atelier*, trying on a pair of old Pompadour shoes, with large faded rosettes and pink heels, which she had at that moment routed out of a broker's shop in the Rue de Seine, on her way back from the Luxembourg with David. They made her feet look enchantingly small, and she was holding back her skirts that she might get a good look at them.

Her conviction of David's passion did not for some time lessen her interest in the shoes, but at last she kicked them off, and flung herself back on the divan, to think out the situation a little.

Yes, the English youth's adoration could no longer be ignored. It had become evident, even to her own

acquaintances and comrades in the various galleries she was now haunting in this bye-time of the artistic year. Whenever she and he appeared together now, there were sly looks and smiles.

The scandal of it did not affect her in the least. She belonged to Bohemia, so apparently did he. She had been perfectly honest till now; but she had never let any convention stand in her way. All her conceptions of the relations between men and women were of an extremely free kind. Her mother's blood in her accounted both for a certain coldness and a certain personal refinement which both divided and protected her from a great many of her acquaintance, but through her father she had been acquainted for years with the type of life and *ménage* which prevails among a certain section of the French artist class, and if the occasion were but strong enough she had no instincts inherited or acquired which would stand in the way of the gratification of passion.

On the contrary, her reasoned opinions so far as she had any were all in favour of *l'union libre*—that curious type of association which held the artist Théodore Rousseau for life to the woman who passed as his wife, and which obtains to a remarkable extent, with all those accompaniments of permanence, fidelity, and mutual service, which are commonly held to belong only to *l'union légale*, in one or two strata of French society. She was capable of sentiment; she had hidden veins of womanish weakness; but at the same time the little creature's prevailing temper was one of remarkable coolness and audacity. She judged for herself; she had read for herself, observed for herself. Such a temper had hitherto preserved her from adventures; but, upon occasion, it might as easily land her in one. She was at once a daughter of art and a daughter of the people, with a cross strain of gentle



breeding and intellectual versatility thrown in, which made her more interesting and more individual than the rest of her class.

'We are a pair of Romantics out of date, you and I,' she had said once to David, half mocking, half in earnest, and the phrase fitted the relation and position of the pair very nearly. In spite of the enormous difference of their habits and training they had at bottom similar tastes—the same capacity for the excitements of art and imagination, the same shrinking from the coarse and ugly sides of the life amid which they moved, the same cravings for novelty and experience.

David went no more to the 'Trois Rats,' and when, in obedience to Lenain's recommendation, he had bought and begun to read a novel of the Goncourts, he threw it from him in a disgust beyond expression. *Her* talk, meanwhile, was in some respects of the freest; she would discuss subjects impossible to the English girl of the same class; she asked very few questions as to the people she mixed with; and he was, by now, perfectly acquainted with her view, that on the whole marriage was for the *bourgeois*, and had few attractions for people who were capable of penetrating deeper into the rich growths of life. But there was no *personal* taint or license in what she said; and she herself could be always happily divided from her topics. Their Bohemia was canopied with illusions, but the illusions on the whole were those of poetry.

Were all David's illusions hers, however? *Love!* She thought of it, half laughing, as she lay on the divan. She knew nothing about it—she was for *art*. Yet what a brow, what eyes, what a gait—like a young Achilles!

She sprang up to look at a sketch of him, dashed off the day before, which was on the easel. Yes, it

was like. There was the quick ardent air, the southern colour, the clustering black hair, the young parting of the lips. The invitation of the eyes was irresistible—she smiled into them—the little pale face flushing.

But at the same moment her attention was caught by a sketch pinned against the wall just behind the easel.

‘Ah! my cousin, my good cousin!’ she said, with a little mocking twist of the mouth; ‘how strange that you have not been here all this time—never once! There was something said, I remember, about a visit to Bordeaux about now. Ah! well—*tant mieux*—for you would be rather jealous, my cousin!’

Then she sat down with her hands on her knees, very serious. How long since they met? A week. How long till the temporary closing of the Salon and the voting of the rewards? A fortnight. Well, should it go on till then? Yes or no? As soon as she knew her fate—or at any rate if she got her *mention*—she would go back to work. She had two subjects in her mind; she would work at home, and Taranne had promised to come and advise her. Then she would have no time for handsome English boys. But till then?

She took an anemone from a bunch David had brought her, and began to pluck off the petals, alternating ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ The last petal fell to ‘yes.’

‘I should have done just the same if it had been “no,”’ she said, laughing. ‘*Allons*, he amuses me, and I do him no harm. When I go back to work he can do his business. He has done none yet. He will forget me and make some money.’

She paced up and down the studio thinking again. She was conscious of some remorse for her part in sending the Englishman’s sister to the Cervins. The

matter had never been mentioned again between her and David; yet she knew instinctively that he was often ill at ease. The girl was perpetually in Montjoie's studio, and surrounded in public places by a crew of his friends. Madame Cervin was constantly in attendance no doubt, but if it came to a struggle she would have no power with the English girl, whose obstinacy was in proportion to her ignorance.

Elise had herself once stopped Madame Cervin on the stairs, and said some frank things of the sculptor, in order to quiet an uncomfortable conscience.

'Ah! you do not like Monsieur Montjoie?' said the other, looking hard at her.

Elise coloured, then she recovered herself.

'All the world knows that Monsieur Montjoie has no scruples, madame,' she cried angrily. 'You know it yourself. It is a shame. That girl understands nothing.'

Madame Cervin laughed.

'Certainly she understands everything that she pleases, mademoiselle. But if there is any anxiety, let her brother come and look after her. He can take her where she wants to go. I should be glad indeed. I am as tired as a dog. Since she came it is one *tapage* from morning till night.'

And Elise retired, discomfited before those small malicious eyes. Since David's adoration for the girl artist in No. 27 had become more or less public property, Madame Cervin, who had seen from the beginning that 'Louie was a burden on her brother, had decidedly the best of the situation.

'Has she lent Montjoie money?'

Elise meditated. The little *bourgeoise* had a curious weakness for posing as the patron of the various artists in the house. 'Very possible! and she looks on the Mænad as the only way of getting it back?

She would sell her soul for a napoleon—I always knew that. *Canaille*, all of them!’

And the meditation ended in the impatient conclusion that neither she nor the brother had any responsibility. After all, any decent girl, French or English, could soon see for herself what manner of man was Jules Montjoie! And now for the ‘private view’ of a certain artistic club to which she had promised to take her English acquaintance. All the members of the club were young—of the new rebellious school of ‘*plein air*’—the afternoon promised to be amusing.

So the companionship of these two went on, and David passed from one golden day to another. How she lectured him, the little, vain, imperious thing; and how meek he was with her, how different from his Manchester self! The woman’s cleverness filled the field. The man, wholly preoccupied with other things, did not care to produce himself, and in the first ardour of his new devotion kept all the self-assertive elements of his own nature in the background, caring for nothing but to watch her eyes as she talked, to have her voice in his ears, to keep her happy and content in his company.

Yet she was not taken in. With other people he must be proud, argumentative, self-willed—that she was sure of; but her conviction only made her realise her power over him with the more pleasure. His naïve respect for her own fragmentary knowledge, his unbounded admiration for her talent, his quick sympathy for all she did and was, these things little by little tended to excite, to preoccupy her.

Especially was she bent upon his artistic education. She carried him hither and thither, to the Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Salon, insisting with a feverish eloquence and invention that he should worship all that she worshipped—no matter if he did not understand!

—let him worship all the same—till he had learnt his new alphabet with a smiling docility, and caught her very tricks of phrase. Especially were they haunters of the sculptures in the Louvre, where, because of the difficulty of it, she piqued herself most especially on knowledge, and could convict him most triumphantly of a barbarian ignorance. Up and down they wandered, and she gave him eyes, whether for Artemis, or Aphrodite, or Apollo, or still more for the significant and troubling art of the Renaissance, French and Italian. She would flit before him, perching here and there like a bird, and quivering through and through with a voluble enjoyment.

Then from these lingerings amid a world charged at every point with the elements of passion and feeling, they would turn into the open air, into the May sunshine, which seemed to David's northern eyes so lavish and inexhaustible, carrying with it inevitably the kindness of the gods! They would sit out of doors either in the greenwood paths of the Bois, where he could lie at her feet, and see nothing but her face and the thick young wood all round them, or in some corner of the Champs-Élysées, or the sun-beaten Quai de la Conférence, where the hurrying life of the town brushed past them incessantly, yet without disturbing for a moment their absorption in or entertainment of each other.

Yet all through she maintained her mastery of the situation. She was a riddle to him often, poor boy! One moment she would lend herself in bewildering unexpected ways to his passion, the next she would allow him hardly the privileges of the barest acquaintance, hardly the carrying of her cloak, the touch of her hand. But she had no qualms. It was but to last another fortnight; the friendship soothed and beguiled for her these days of excited waiting; and a

woman, when she is an artist and a Romantic, may at least sit, smoke, and chat with whomsoever she likes, provided it be a time of holiday, and she is not betraying her art.

Meanwhile the real vulgarity of the nature—its insatiable vanity, its reckless ambition—was masked from David mainly by the very jealousy and terror which her artist's life soon produced in him. He saw no sign of other lovers; she had many acquaintances but no intimates; and the sketch in her room had been carelessly explained to him as the portrait of her cousin. But the *atelier*, and the rivalries it represented:—after three days with her he had learnt that what had seemed to him the extravagance, the pose of her first talk with him, was in truth the earnest, the reality of her existence. She told him that since she was a tiny child she had dreamed of *fame*—dreamed of people turning in the streets when she passed—of a glory that should lift her above all the common-places of existence, and all the disadvantages of her own start in life.

‘I am neither beautiful, nor rich, nor well-born; but if I have talent, what matter? Everyone will be at my feet. And if I have no talent—*grand Dieu!*—what is there left for me but to kill myself?’

And she would clasp her hands round her knees, and look at him with fierce, drawn brows, as though defying him to say a single syllable in favour of any meaner compromise with fate.

This fever of the artist and the *concurrent*—in a woman above all—how it bewildered him! He soon understood enough of it, however, to be desperately jealous of it, to realise something of the preliminary bar it placed between any lover and the girl's heart and life.

Above all was he jealous of her teachers. Taranne clearly could beat her down with a word, reduce her

to tears with an unfavourable criticism; then he had but to hold up a finger, to say, 'Mademoiselle, you have worked well this week, your drawing shows improvement, I have hopes of you,' to bring her to his feet with delight and gratitude. It was a *monstrous* power, this power of the master with his pupil! How could women submit to it?

Yet his lover's instincts led him safely through many perils. He was infinitely complaisant towards all her artistic talk, all her gossip of the *atelier*. It seemed to him—but then his apprehension of this strange new world was naturally a somewhat confused one—that Elise was not normally on terms with any of her fellow-students.

'If I don't get my *mention*,' she would say passionately, 'I tell you again it will be intrigue: it will be those *creatures* in the *atelier* who want to get rid of me—to finish with me. Ah! I will *crush* them all yet. And I have been good to them all—every one—I vow I have—even to that animal of a Bréal, who is always robbing me of my place at the *concours*, and taking mean advantages. *Misérables!*'

And the tears would stand in her angry eyes; her whole delicate frame would throb with fierce feeling.

Gradually he learnt how to deal with these fits, even when they chilled him with a dread, a conviction he dared not analyse. He would so soothe and listen to her, so ply her with the praises of her gift, which came floated to him on the talk of those acquaintances of hers to whom she had introduced him, that her most deep-rooted irritations would give way for a time. The woman would reappear; she would yield to the charm of his admiring eyes, his stammered flatteries; her whole mood would break up, dissolve into eager softness, and she would fall into a childish plaintiveness, saying wild generous things even of her

rivals, now there seemed to be no one under heaven to take their part, and at last, even, letting her little hand fall into those eager brown ones which lay in wait for it, letting it linger there—forgotten.

Especially was she touched in his favour by the way in which Regnault had singled him out. After he had given her the history of that midnight walk, he saw clearly that he had risen to a higher plane in her esteem. She had no heroes exactly; but she had certain artistic passions, certain romantic fancies, which seemed to touch deep fibres in her. Her admiration for Regnault was one of these; but David soon understood that he had no cause whatever to be jealous of it. It was a matter purely of the mind and the imagination.

So the days passed—the hot lengthening days. Sometimes in the long afternoons they pushed far afield into the neighbourhood of Paris. The green wooded hills of Sèvres and St. Cloud, the blue curves and reaches of the Seine, the flashing lights and figures, the pleasures of companionship, self-revelation, independence—the day was soon lost in these quick impressions, and at night they would come back in a fragrant moonlight, descending from their train into the noise and glitter of the streets, only to draw closer together—for surely on these crowded pavements David might claim her little arm in his for safety's sake—till at last they stood in the dark passage between his door and hers, and she would suddenly pelt him with a flower, spring up her small stairway, and lock her door behind her, before, in his emotion, he could find his voice or a farewell. Then he would make his way into his own den, and sit there in the dark, lost in a thronging host of thoughts and memories,—feeling life one vibrating delight.



At last one morning he awoke to the fact that only four days more remained before the date on which, according to their original plan, they were to go back to Manchester. He laughed aloud when the recollection first crossed his mind; then, having a moment to himself, he sat down and scrawled a few hasty words to John. Business detained him yet a while—would detain him a few weeks—let John manage as he pleased, his employer trusted everything to him—and money was enclosed. Then he wrote another hurried note to the bank where he had placed his six hundred pounds. Let them send him twenty pounds at once, in Bank of England notes. He felt himself a young king as he gave the order—king of this mean world and of its dross. All his business projects had vanished from his mind. He could barely have recalled them if he had tried. During the first days of his acquaintance with Elise he had spent a few spare hours in turning over the boxes on the quays, in talks with booksellers in the Rue de Seine or the Rue de Lille, in preliminary inquiries respecting some commissions he had undertaken. But now, every hour, every thought were hers. What did money matter, in the name of Heaven? Yet when his twenty pounds came, he changed his notes and pocketed his napoleons with a vast satisfaction. For they meant power, they meant opportunity; every one should be paid away against so many hours by her side, at her feet.

Meanwhile day after day he had reminded himself of Louie, and day after day he had forgotten her again, absolutely, altogether. Once or twice he met her on the stairs, started, remembered, and tried to question her as to what she was doing. But she was still angry with him for his interference on the day of the pose; and he could get very little out of her. Let him only leave her alone; she was not a school-

child to be meddled with; that he would find out. As to Madame Cervin, she was a little fool, and her meanness in money matters was disgraceful; but she, Louie, could put up with her. One of these meetings took place on the day of his letters to the bank and to John. Louie asked him abruptly when he thought of returning. He flushed deeply, stammered, said he was inclined to stay longer, but of course she could be sent home. An escort could be found for her. She stared at him; then suddenly her black eyes sparkled, and she laughed so that the sound echoed up the dark stairs. David hotly inquired what she meant; but she ran up still laughing loudly, and he was left to digest her scornful amusement as best he could.

Not long after he found the Cervins' door open as he passed, and in the passage saw a group of people, mostly men; Montjoie in front, just lighting a cigar; Louie's black hat in the background. David hurried past; he loathed the sculptor's battered look, his insolent eye, his slow ambiguous manner; he still burnt with the anger and humiliation of his ineffectual descent on the man's domain. But Madame Cervin, catching sight of him from the back of the party, pursued him panting and breathless to his own door. Would Monsieur please attend to her; he was so hard to get hold of; never, in fact, at home! Would he settle her little bill, and give her more money for current expenses? Mademoiselle Louie required to be kept amused—*mon Dieu!*—from morning to night! She had no objection, provided it were made worth her while. And how much longer did monsieur think of remaining in Paris?

David answered recklessly that he did not know, paid her bill for Louie's board and extras without looking at it, and gave her a napoleon in hand, where-

with she departed, her covetous eyes aglow, her mouth full of excited civilities.

She even hesitated a moment at the door and then came back to assure him that she was really all discretion with regard to his sister; no doubt monsieur had heard some unpleasant stories, for instance, of M. Montjoie; she could understand perfectly, that coming from such a quarter, they had affected monsieur's mind; but he would see that she could not make a sudden quarrel with one of her husband's old friends; Mademoiselle Louie (who was already her *chérie*) had taken a fancy to pose for this statue; it was surely better to indulge her than to rouse her self-will, but she could assure monsieur that she had looked after her as though it had been her own daughter.

David stood impatiently listening. In a few minutes he was to be with Elise at the corner of the Rue Lafitte. Of course it was all right!—and if it were not, he could not mend it. The woman was vulgar and grasping, but what reason was there to think anything else that was evil of her? Probably she had put up with Louie more easily than a woman of a higher type would have done. At any rate she was doing her best, and what more could be asked of him than he had done? Louie behaved outrageously in Manchester; he could not help it, either there or here. He had interfered again and again, and had always been a fool for his pains. Let her choose for herself. A number of old and long-hidden exasperations seemed now to emerge whenever he thought of his sister.

Five minutes later he was in the Rue Lafitte.

It was Elise's caprice that they should always meet in this way, out of doors; at the corner of their own street; on the steps of the Madeleine; beneath the Vendôme Column; in front of a particular bonbon

shop; or beside the third tree from the Place de la Concorde in the northern alley of the Tuileries Gardens. He had been only once inside her studio since the first evening of their acquaintance.

His mind was full of excitement, for the Salon had been closed since the day before; and the awards of the jury would be informally known, at least in some cases, by the evening. Elise's excitement since the critical hours began had been pitiful to see. As he stood waiting he gave his whole heart to her and her ambitions, flinging away from him with a passionate impatience every other interest, every other thought.

When she came she looked tired and white. 'I can't go to galleries, and I can't paint,' she said, shortly. 'What shall we do?'

Her little black hat was drawn forward, but through the dainty veil he could see the red spot on either cheek. Her hands were pushed deep into the pockets of her light grey jacket, recalling the energetic attitude in which she had stood over Louie on the occasion of their first meeting. He guessed at once that she had not slept, and that she was beside herself with anxiety. How to manage her?—how to console her? He felt himself so young and raw; yet already his passion had awakened in him a hundred new and delicate perceptions.

'Look at the weather!' he said to her. 'Come out of town! let us make for the Gare St. Lazare, and spend the day at St. Germain.'

She hesitated.

'Taranne will write to me directly he knows—directly! He might write any time this evening. No, no!—I can't go! I must be on the spot.'

'He can't write *before* the evening. You said yourself before seven nothing could be known. We will get back in ample time, I swear.'

They were standing in the shade of a shop awning, and he was looking down at her, eagerly, persuasively. She had a debate with herself, then with a despairing gesture of the hands, she turned abruptly—

‘Well then—to the station!’

When they had started, she lay back in the empty carriage he had found for her, and shut her eyes. The air was oppressive, for the day before had been showery, and the heat this morning was a damp heat which relaxed the whole being. But before the train moved, she felt a current of coolness, and hastily looking up she saw that David had possessed himself of the cheap fan which had been lying on her lap, and was fanning her with his gaze fixed upon her, a gaze which haunted her as her eyelids fell again.

Suddenly she fell into an inward perplexity, an inward impatience on the subject of her companion, and her relation to him. It had been all very well till yesterday! But now the artistic and professional situation had become so strained, so intense, she could hardly give him a thought. His presence there, and its tacit demands upon her, tried her nerves. Her mind was full of a hundred *misères d’atelier*, of imaginary enemies and intrigues; one minute she was all hope, the next all fear; and she turned sick when she thought of Taranne’s letter.

What had she been entangling herself for? she whose whole life and soul belonged to art and ambition! This comradeship, begun as a caprice, an adventure, was becoming too serious. It must end!—end probably to-day, as she had all along determined. Then, as she framed the thought, she became conscious of a shrinking, a difficulty, which enraged and frightened her.

She sat up abruptly and threw back her veil.

David made a little exclamation as he dropped the fan.

'Yes!' she said, looking at him with a little frown, 'yes—what did you say?'

Then she saw that his whole face was working with emotion.

'I wish you would have stayed like that,' he said, in a voice which trembled.

'Why?'

'Because—because it was so sweet!'

She gave a little start, and a sudden red sprang into her cheek.

His heart leapt. He had never seen her blush for any word of his before.

'I prefer the air itself,' she said, bending forward and looking away from him out of the open window at the villas they were passing.

Yet, all the while, as the country houses succeeded each other and her eyes followed them, she saw not their fragrant, flowery gardens, but the dark face and tall young form opposite. He was handsomer even than when she had seen him first—handsomer far than her portrait of him. Was it the daily commerce with new forms of art and intelligence which Paris and her companionship had brought him?—or simply the added care which a man in love instinctively takes of the little details of his dress and social conduct?—which had given him this look of greater maturity, greater distinction? Her heart fluttered a little—then she fell back on the thought of Taranne's letter.

They emerged from the station at St. Germain into a fierce blaze of sun, which burned on the square red mass of the old château, and threw a blinding glare on the white roads.

'Quick! for the trees!' she said, and they both hurried over the open space which lay between them and the superb chestnut grove which borders the famous terrace. Once there all was well, and they

could wander from alley to alley in a green shade, the white blossom-spikes shining in the sun overhead, and to their right the blue and purple plain, with the Seine winding and dimpling, the river polders with their cattle, and far away the dim heights of Montmartre just emerging behind the great mass of Mont Valérien, which blocked the way to Paris. Such lights and shades, such spring leaves, such dancing airs!

Elise drew a long breath, slipped off her jacket which he made a joy of carrying, and loosened the black lace at her throat which fell so prettily over the little pink cotton underneath.

Then she looked at her companion unsteadily. There was excitement in this light wind, this summer sun. Her great resolve to 'end it' began to look less clear to her. Nay, she stood still and smiled up into his face, a very siren of provocation and wild charm—the wind blowing a loose lock about her eyes.

'Is this better than England—than your Manchester?' she asked him scornfully, and he—traitor!—flinging out of his mind all the bounties of an English May, all his memories of the whitethorn and waving fern and foaming streams set in the deep purple breast of the Scout—vowed to her that nowhere else could there be spring or beauty or sunshine, but only here in France and at St. Germain.

At this she smiled and blushed—no woman could have helped the blush. In truth, his will, steadily bent on one end, while hers was distracted by half a dozen different impulses, was beginning to affect her in a troubling, paralysing way. For all her parade of a mature and cynical enlightenment, she was just twenty; it was such a May day as never was; and when once she had let herself relax towards him again, the inward ache of jealous ambition made this pas-

sionate worship beside her, irrelevant as it was, all the more soothing, all the more luring.

Still she felt that something must be done to stem the tide, and again she fell back upon luncheon. They had bought some provisions on their way to the station in Paris. He might subsist on scenery and æsthetics if he pleased—as for her, she was a common person with common needs, and must eat.

‘Oh, not here!’ he cried, ‘why, this is all in public. Look at the nursemaids, and the boys playing, and the carriages on the terrace. Come on a little farther. You remember that open place with the thorns and the stream?—there we should be in peace.’

She did not know that she wanted to be in peace; but she gave way.

So they wandered on past the chestnuts into the tangled depths of the old forest. A path sunk in brambles and fern took them through beech wood to the little clearing David had in his mind. A tiny stream much choked by grass and last year’s leaves ran along one side of it. A fallen log made a seat, and the beech trees spread their new green fans overhead, or flung them out to right and left around the little space, and for some distance in front, till the green sprays and the straight grey stems were lost on all sides in a brownish pinkish mist which betrayed a girdle of oaks not yet conquered by the summer.

She took her seat on the log, and he flung himself beside her. Out came the stores in his pockets, and once more they made themselves childishly merry over a scanty meal, which left them still hungry.

Then for an hour or two they sat lounging and chattering in the warm shade, while the gentle wind brought them every spring scent, every twitter of the birds, every swaying murmur of the forest. David lay on his back against the log, his eyes now plunging



into the forest, now watching the curls of smoke from his pipe mounting against the background of green, or the moist fleecy clouds which seemed to be actually tangled in the tree-tops, now fixed as long as they dared on his companion's face. She was not beautiful? Let her say it! For she had the softest mouth which drooped like a child with a grievance when she was silent, and melted into the subtlest curves when she talked. She had, as a rule, no colour, but her clear paleness, as contrasted with the waves of her light-gold hair, seemed to him an exquisite beauty. The eyebrows had an oriental trick of mounting at the corners, but the effect, taken with the droop of the mouth, was to give the face in repose a certain charming look of delicate and plaintive surprise. Above all it was her smallness which entranced him; her feet and hands, her tiny waist, the *finesse* of her dress and movements. All the women he had ever seen, Lucy and Dora among them, served at this moment only to make a foil in his mind for this little Parisian beside him.

How she talked this afternoon! In her quick reaction towards him she was after all more the woman than she had ever been. She chattered of her forlorn childhood, of her mother's woes and her father's iniquities, using the frankest language about these last; then of herself and her troubles. He listened and laughed; his look as she poured herself out to him was in itself a caress. Moreover, unconsciously to both, their relation had changed somewhat. The edge of his first ignorance and shyness had rubbed off. He was no longer a mere slave at her feet. Rather a new and sweet equality seemed at last after all these days to have arisen between them; a bond more simple, more natural. Every now and then he caught his breath under the sense of a coming crisis; meanwhile

the May day was a dream of joy, and life an intoxication.

But he controlled himself long, being indeed in desperate fear of breaking the spell which held her to him this heavenly afternoon. The hours slipped by; the air grew stiller and sultrier. Presently, just as the sun was sinking into the western wood, a woman, carrying a bundle and with a couple of children, crossed the glade. One child was on her arm; the other, whimpering with heat and fatigue, dragged wearily behind her, a dead weight on its mother's skirts. The woman looked worn out, and was scolding the crying child in a thin exasperated voice. When she came to the stream, she put down her bundle, and finding a seat by the water, she threw back her cotton bonnet and began to wipe her brow, with long breaths which were very near to groans. Then the child on her lap set up a shout of hunger, while the child behind her began to cry louder than before. The woman hastily raised the baby, unfastened her dress, and gave it the breast, so stifling its cries; then, first slapping the other child with angry vehemence, she groped in the bundle for a piece of sausage roll, and by dint of alternately shaking the culprit and stuffing the food into its poor open mouth, succeeded in reducing it to a chewing and sobbing silence. The mother herself was clearly at the last gasp, and when at length the children were quiet, as she turned her harshly outlined head so as to see who the other occupants of the glade might be, her look had in it the dull hostility of the hunted creature whose powers of self-defence are almost gone.

But she could not rest long. After ten minutes, at longest, she dragged herself up from the grass with another groan, and they all disappeared into the trees, one of the children crying again—a pitiable trio.

Elise had watched the group closely, and the sight seemed in some unexplained way to chill and irritate the girl.

'There is one of the drudges that men make,' she said bitterly, looking after the woman.

'Men?' he demurred; 'I suspect the husband is a drudge too.'

'Not he!' she cried. 'At least he has liberty, choice, comrades. He is not battered out of all pleasure, all individuality, that other human beings may have their way and be cooked for, and this wretched human race may last. The woman is always the victim, say what you like. But for *some* of us at least there is a way out!'

She looked at him defiantly.

A tremor swept through him under the suddenness of this jarring note. Then a delicious boldness did away with the tremor. He met her eyes straight.

'Yes—*love* can always find it,' he said under his breath—'or make it.'

She wavered an instant, then she made a rally.

'I know nothing about that,' she said scornfully; 'I was thinking of art. *Art* breaks all chains, or accepts none. The woman that has art is free, and she alone; for she has scaled the men's heaven and stolen their sacred fire.'

She clasped her hands tightly on her knee; her face was full of aggression.

David sat looking at her, trying to smile, but his heart sank within him.

He threw away his pipe, and laid his head down against the log, not far from her, drawing his hat over his eyes. So they sat in silence a little while, till he looked up and said, in a bright beseeching tone:

'Finish me that scene in *Hernani*!'

The day before, after a *matinée* of *Andromaque* at

the Théâtre-Français, in a moment of rebellion and reaction against all things classical, they had both thrown themselves upon *Hernani*. She had read it aloud to him in a green corner of the Bois, having a faculty that way, and bidding him take it as a French lesson. He took it, of course, as a lesson in nothing but the art of making wild speeches to the woman one loves.

But now she demurred.

'It is not here.'

He produced it out of his pocket.

She shrugged her shoulders.

'I am not in the vein.'

'You said last week you were not in the vein,' he said, laughing tremulously, 'and you read me that scene from *Ruy Blas*, so that when we went to see Sarah Bernhardt in the evening I was disappointed!'

She smiled, not being able to help it, for all flattery was sweet to her.

'We must catch our train. I would never speak to you again if we were late!'

He held up his watch to her.

'An hour—it is, at the most, half an hour's walk.'

'*Ah, mon Dieu!*' she cried, clasping her hands. 'It is all over, the vote is given. Perhaps Taranne is writing to me now, at this moment!'

'Read—read! and forget it half an hour more.'

She caught up the book in a frenzy, and began to read, first carelessly and with unintelligible haste; but before a page was over, the artist had recaptured her, she had slackened, she had begun to interpret.

It was the scene in the third act where Hernani the outlaw, who has himself bidden his love, Doña Sol, marry her kinsman the old Duke, rather than link her fortunes to those of a ruined chief of banditti, comes in upon the marriage he has sanctioned, nay com-

manded. The bridegroom's wedding gifts are there on the table. He and Doña Sol are alone.

The scene begins with a speech of bitter irony from Hernani. His friends have been defeated and dispersed. He is alone in the world; a price is on his head; his lot is more black and hopeless than before. Yet his heart is bursting within him. He had bidden her, indeed, but how could she have obeyed! Traitor! false love! false heart!

He takes up the jewels one by one.

*'This necklace is brave work,—and the bracelet is rare—though not so rare as the woman who beneath a brow so pure can bear about with her a heart so vile! And what in exchange? A little love? Bah!—a mere trifle! . . . Great God! that one can betray like this—and feel no shame—and live!'*

For answer, Doña Sol goes proudly up to the wedding casket, and, with a gesture matching his own, takes out the dagger from its lowest depth. 'You stop halfway!' she says to him calmly, and he understands. In an instant he is at her feet, tortured with remorse and passion, and the magical love scene of the act develops. What ingenuity of tenderness, yet what truth!

*'She has pardoned me, and loves me! Ah, who will make it possible that I too, after such words, should love Hernani and forgive him? Tears!—thou weepest, and again it is my fault! And who will punish me? for thou wilt but forgive again! Ah, my friends are all dead!—and it is a madman speaks to thee. Forgive! I would fain love—I know not how. And yet, what deeper love could there be than this? Oh! Weep not, but die with me! If I had but a world, and could give it thee!'*

The voice of the reader quivered. A hand came upon the book and caught her hand. She looked up and found herself face to face with David, kneeling

beside her. They stared at each other. Then he said, half choked:

‘I can’t bear it any more! I love you with all my heart—oh, you know—you know I do!’

She was stupefied for a moment, and then with a sudden gesture she drew herself away, and pushed him from her.

‘Leave me alone—leave me free—this moment!’ she said passionately. ‘Why do you persecute and pursue me? What right have you? I have been kind to you, and you lay snares for me. I will have nothing more to do with you. Let me go home, and let us part.’

She got up, and with feverish haste tied her veil over her hat. He had fallen with his arms across the log, and his face hidden upon them. She paused irresolutely.

‘Monsieur David!’

He made no answer.

She bent down and touched him.

He shook his head.

‘No, no!—go!’ he said thickly.

She bit her lip. The breath under her little lace tippet rose and fell with furious haste. Then she sat down beside him, and with her hands clasped on her knee began to plead with him in tremulous light tones, as though they were a pair of children. Why was he so foolish? Why had he tried to spoil their beautiful afternoon? She must go. The train would not wait for them. But he must come too. He *must*.

After a little he rose without a word, gathered up the book and her wrap, and off they set along the forest path.

She stole a glance at him. It seemed to her that he walked as if he did not know where he was or who was beside him.

Her heart smote her. When they were deep in a

hazel thicket, she stole out a small impulsive hand, and slipped it into his, which hung beside him. He started. Presently she felt a slight pressure, but it relaxed instantly, and she took back her hand, feeling ashamed of herself, and aggrieved besides. She shot on in front of him, and he followed.

So they walked through the chestnuts and across the white road to the station in the red glow of the evening sun. He followed her into the railway carriage, did her every little service with perfect gentleness; then when they started he took the opposite corner, and turning away from her, stared, with eyes that evidently saw nothing, at the villas beside the line, at the children in the streets, at the boats on the dazzling river.

She in her corner tried to be angry, to harden her heart, to possess herself only with the thought of Taranne's letter. But the evening was not as the morning. That dark teasing figure at the other end, outlined against the light of the window, intruded, took up a share in her reverie she resented but could not prevent—nay, presently absorbed it altogether. Absurd! she had had love made to her before, and had known how to deal with it. The artist must have comrades, and the comrades may play false; well, then the artist must take care of herself.

She had done no harm; she was not to blame; she had let him know from the beginning that she only lived for art. What folly, and what treacherous, inconsiderate folly, it had all been!

So she lashed herself up. But her look stole incessantly to that opposite corner, and every now and then she felt her lips trembling and her eyes growing hot in a way which annoyed her.

When they reached Paris she said to him imperiously as he helped her out of the carriage, 'A cab, please!'

He found one for her, and would have closed the door upon her.

'No, come in!' she said to him with the same accent.

His look in return was like a blow to her, there was such an inarticulate misery in it. But he got in, and they drove on in silence.

When they reached the Rue Chantal she sprang out, snatched her key from the *concierge*, and ran up the stairs. But when she reached the point on that top passage where their ways diverged, she stopped and looked back for him.

'Come and see my letter,' she said to him, hesitating.

He stood quite still, his arms hanging beside him, and drew a long breath that stabbed her.

'I think not.'

And he turned away to his own door.

But she ran back to him and laid her hand on his arm. Her eyes were full of tears.

'*Please*, Monsieur David. We were good friends this morning. Be now and always my good friend!'

He shook his head again, but he let himself be led by her. Still holding him—torn between her quick remorse and her eagerness for Taranne's letter, she unlocked her door. One dart for the table. Yes! there it lay. She took it up; then her face blanched suddenly, and she came piteously up to David, who was standing just inside the closed door.

'Wish me luck, Monsieur David, wish me luck, as you did before!'

But he was silent, and she tore open the letter. '*Dieu!—mon Dieu!*'

It was a sound of ecstasy. Then she flung down the letter, and running up to David, she caught his arm again with both hands.



'*Triomphe! Triomphe!* I have got my *mention*, and the picture they skied is to be brought down to the line, and Taranne says I have done better than any other pupil of his of the same standing—that I have an extraordinary gift—that I must succeed, all the world says so—and two other members of the jury send me their compliments. 'Ah! Monsieur David'—in a tone of reproach—'be kind—be nice—congratulate me.'

And she drew back an arm's-length that she might look at him, her own face overflowing with exultant colour and life. Then she approached again, her mood changing.

'It is too *detestable* of you to stand there like a statue! ah! that it is! For I never deceived you, no, never. I said to you the first night—there is nothing else for me in the world but art—nothing! Do you hear? This falling in love spoils everything—*everything!* Be friends with me. You will be going back to England soon. Perhaps—perhaps'—her voice faltered—'I will take a week's more holiday—Taranne says I ought. But then I must go to work—and we will part friends—always friends—and respect and understand each other all our lives, *n'est-ce pas?*'

'Oh! let me go!' cried David fiercely, his loud strained voice startling them both, and flinging her hand away from him, he made for the door. But impulsively she threw herself against it, dismayed to find herself so near crying, and shaken with emotion from head to foot.

They stood absorbed in each other; she with her hands behind her on the door, and her hat tumbling back from her masses of loosened hair. And as she gazed she was fascinated; for there was a grand look about him in his misery—a look which was strange to her, and which was in fact the emergence of his rugged

and Puritan race. But whatever it was it seized her, as all aspects of his personal beauty had done from the beginning. She held out her little white hands to him, appealing.

‘No! no!’ he said roughly, trying to put her away, ‘*never—never—*friends! You may kill me—you shan’t make a child of me any more. Oh! my God!’ It was a cry of agony. ‘A man can’t go about with a girl in this way, if—if she is like you, and not——’ His voice broke—he lost the thread of what he was saying, and drew his hand across his eyes before he broke out again. ‘What—you thought I was just a raw cub, to be played with. Oh, I am too dull, I suppose, to understand! But I have grown under your hands anyway. I don’t know myself—I should do you or myself a mischief if this went on. Let me go—and go home to-night!’

And again he made a threatening step forward. But when he came close to her he broke down.

‘I would have worked for you so,’ he said thickly. ‘For your sake I would have given up my country. I would have made myself French altogether. It should have been marriage or no marriage as you pleased. You should have been free to go or stay. Only I would have laid myself down for you to walk over. I have some money. I would have settled here. I would have protected you. It is not right for a woman to be alone—anyone so young and so pretty. I thought you understood—that you must understand—that your heart was melting to me. I should have done your work no harm—I should have been your slave—you know that. That *cursed, cursed* art!’

He spoke with a low intense emphasis; then turning away he buried his face in his hands.

‘David!’

He looked up startled. She was stepping towards him, a smile of ineffable charm floating as it were upon her tears.

'I don't know what is the matter with me!' she said tremulously. 'There is trouble in it, I know! It is the broken glass coming true. *Mais, voyons! c'est plus fort que moi!* Do you care so much—would it break your heart—would you let me work—and never, never get in the way? Would you be content that art should come first and you second? I can promise you no more than that—not one little inch! *Would you be content? Say!*'

He ran to her with a cry. She let him put his arms round her, and a shiver of excitement ran through her.

'What does it mean?' she said breathlessly. 'One is so strong one moment—and the next—like this! Oh, why did you ever come?'

Then she burst into tears, hiding her eyes upon his breast.

'Oh! I have been so much alone! but I have got a heart somewhere all the same. If you will have it, you must take the consequences.'

Awed by the mingling of his silence with that painful throbbing beneath her cheek, she looked up. He stooped—and their young faces met.

## CHAPTER VII

DURING the three weeks which had ended for David and Elise in this scene of passion, Louie had been deliberately going her own way, managing even in this unfamiliar *milieu* to extract from it almost all the excitement or amusement it was capable of yielding her. All the morning she dragged Madame Cervin

about the Paris streets; in the afternoon she would sometimes pose for Montjoie, and sometimes not; he had to bring her bonbons and theatre tickets to bribe her, and learn new English wherewith to flatter her. Then in the evenings she made the Cervins take her to theatres and various entertainments more or less reputable, for which of course David paid. It seemed to Madame Cervin, as she sat staring beside them, that her laughs never fell in with the laughs of other people. But whether she understood or no, it amused her, and go she would.

A looker-on might have found the relations between Madame Cervin and her boarder puzzling at first sight. In reality they represented a compromise between considerations of finance and considerations of morals—as the wife of the *ancien prix de Rome* understood these last. For the ex-modiste was by no means without her virtues or her scruples. She had ugly manners and ideas on many points, but she had lived a decent life at any rate since her marriage with a man for whom she had an incomprehensible affection, heavily as he burdened and exploited her; and though she took all company pretty much as it came, she had a much keener sense now than in her youth of the practical advantages of good behaviour to a woman, and of the general reasonableness of the *bourgeois* point of view with regard to marriage and the family. Her youth had been stormy; her middle age tended to a certain conservative philosophy of common sense, and to the development of a rough and ready conscience.

Especially was she conscious of the difficulties of virtue. When Elise Delaunay, for instance, was being scandalously handled by the talkers in her stuffy *salon*, Madame Cervin sat silent. Not only had she her own reasons for being grateful to the little

artist, but with the memory of her own long-past adventures behind her she was capable by now of a secret admiration for an unprotected and struggling girl who had hitherto held her head high, worked hard, and avoided lovers.

So that when the artist's wife undertook the charge of the good-looking English girl she had done it honestly, up to her lights, and she had fulfilled it honestly. She had in fact hardly let Louie Grieve out of her sight since her boarder was handed over to her.

These facts, however, represent only one side of the situation. Madame Cervin was now respectable. She had relinquished years before the *chasse* for personal excitement; she had replaced it by 'the *chasse* of the five-franc piece.' She loved her money passionately; but at the same time she loved power, gossip, and small flatteries. They distracted her, these last, from the depressing spectacle of her husband's gradual and inevitable decay. So that her life represented a balance between these various instincts. For some time past she had gathered about her a train of small artists, whom she mothered and patronised, and whose wild talk and pecuniary straits diversified the monotony of her own childless middle age. Montjoie, whose undoubted talent imposed upon a woman governed during all her later life by the traditions and the admirations of the artist world, had some time before established a hold upon her, partly dependent on a certain magnetism in the man, partly, as Elise had suspected, upon money relations. For the grasping little *bourgeoise* who would haggle for a morning over half a franc, and keep a lynx-eyed watch over the woman who came to do the weekly cleaning, lest the miserable creature should appropriate a crust or a cold potato, had a weak side for her artist friends who flattered and amused her. She would lend to them

now and then out of her hoards; she had lent to Montjoie in the winter when, after months of wild dissipation, he was in dire straits and almost starving.

But having lent, the thought of her jeopardised money would throw her into agonies, and she would scheme perpetually to get it back. Like all the rest of Montjoie's creditors she was hanging on the Mænad, which promised indeed to be the *chef-d'œuvre* of an indisputable talent, could that talent only be kept to work. When the sculptor—whose curiosity had been originally roused by certain phrases of Barbier's in his preliminary letters to his nephew, phrases embellished by Dubois' habitual *fanfaronnade*—had first beheld the English girl, he had temporarily thrown up his work and was lounging about Paris in moody despair, to Madame Cervin's infinite disgust. But at sight of Louie his artist's zeal rekindled. Her wild nature, her half-human eye, the traces of Greek form in the dark features—these things fired and excited him.

'Get me that girl to sit,' he had said to Madame Cervin, 'and the Mænad will be sold in six weeks!'

And Madame Cervin, fully determined on the one hand that Montjoie should finish his statue and pay his debts, and on the other that the English girl should come to no harm from a man of notorious character, had first led up to the sittings, and then superintended them with the utmost vigilance. She meant no harm—the brother was a fool for his pains—but Montjoie should have his sitter. So she sat there, dragon-like, hour after hour, knitting away with her little fat hands, while Louie posed, and Montjoie worked; and groups of the sculptor's friends came in and out, providing the audience which excited the ambition of the man and the vanity of the girl.

So the days passed. At last there came a morning

when Louie came out early from the Cervins' door, shut it behind her, and ran up the ladder-like stairs which led to David's room.

'David!'

Her voice was pitched in no amiable key, as she violently shook the handle of the door. But, call and shake as she might, there was no answer, and after a while she paused, feeling a certain bewilderment.

'It is ridiculous! He can't be out; it isn't half-past eight. It's just his tiresomeness.'

And she made another and still more vehement attempt, all to no purpose. Not a sound was to be heard from the room within. But as she was again standing irresolute, she heard a footstep behind her on the narrow stairs, and looking round saw the *concierge*, Madame Merichat. The woman's thin and sallow face—the face of a born pessimist—had a certain sinister flutter in it.

She held out a letter to the astonished Louie, saying at the same time with a disagreeable smile:

'What is the use of knocking the house down when there is no one there?'

'Where is he?' cried Louie, not understanding her, and looking at the letter with stupefaction.

The woman put it into her hand.

'No one came back last night,' she said with a shrug. 'Neither monsieur nor mademoiselle; and this morning I receive orders to send letters to "Barbizon, près Fontainebleau."''

Louie tore open her letter. It was from David, and dated Barbizon. He would be there, it said, for nearly a month. If she could wait with Madame Cervin till he himself could take her home, well and good. But if that were disagreeable to her, let her communicate with him 'chez Madame Pyat, Barbizon, Fontainebleau,' and he would write to Dora

Lomax at once, and make arrangements for her to lodge there, till he returned to Manchester. Some one could easily be found to look after her on the homeward journey if Madame Cervin took her to the train. Meanwhile he enclosed the money for two weeks' *pension* and twenty francs for pocket money.

No other person was mentioned in the letter, and the writer offered neither explanation nor excuses.

Louie crushed the sheet in her hand, with an exclamation, her cheeks flaming.

'So they are amusing themselves at Fontainebleau?' inquired Madame Merichat, who had been leaning against the wall, twisting her apron and studying the English girl with her hard, malicious eyes. 'Oh! I don't complain; there was a letter for me too. Monsieur has paid all. But I regret for mademoiselle—if mademoiselle is surprised.'

She spoke to deaf ears.

Louie pushed past her, flew downstairs, and rang the Cervins' bell violently. Madame Cervin herself opened it, and the girl threw herself upon her, dragged her into the *salon*, and then said with the look and tone of a fury:

'Read that!'

She held out the crumpled letter. Madame Cervin adjusted her spectacles with shaking hands.

'But it is in English!' she cried in despair.

Louie could have beaten her for not understanding. But, herself trembling with excitement, she was forced to bring all the French words she knew to bear, and between them, somehow, piecemeal, Madame Cervin was brought to a vague understanding of the letter.

'Gone to Fontainebleau!' she cried, subsiding on to the sofa. 'But why, with whom?'

'Why, with that girl, that *creature*—*can't* you understand?' said Louie, pacing up and down.



'Ah, I will go and find out all about that!' said Madame Cervin, and hastily exchanging the blue cotton apron and jacket she wore in the mornings in the privacy of her own apartment for her walking dress, she whisked out to make inquiries.

Louie was left behind, striding from end to end of the little *salon*, brows knit, every feature and limb tense with excitement. As the meaning of her discovery grew plainer to her, as she realised what had happened, and what the bearing of it must be on herself and her own position, the tumult within her rose and rose. After that day in the Louvre her native shrewdness had of course very soon informed her of David's infatuation for the little artist. And when it became plain, not only to her, but to all Elise De-launay's acquaintance, there was much laughter and gossip on the subject in the Cervins' apartment. It was soon discovered that Louie had taken a dislike, which, perhaps, from the beginning had been an intuitive jealousy, to Elise, and had, moreover, no inconvenient sensitiveness on her brother's account, which need prevent the discussion of his love affairs in her presence. So the discussion went freely on, and Louie only regretted that, do what she would to improve herself in French, she understood so little of it. But the tone towards Elise among Montjoie's set, especially from Montjoie himself, was clearly contemptuous and hostile; and Louie instinctively enjoyed the mud which she felt sure was being thrown.

Yet, incredible as it may seem, with all this knowledge on her part, all this amusement at her brother's expense, all this blackening of Elise's character, the possibility of such an event as had actually occurred had never entered the sister's calculations.

And the reason lay in the profound impression which one side of his character had made upon her during

the five months they had been together. A complete stranger to the ferment of the lad's imagination, she had been a constant and chafed spectator of his daily life. The strong self-restraint of it had been one of the main barriers between them. She knew that she was always jarring upon him, and that he was always blaming her recklessness and self-indulgence. She hated his Spartan ways—his teetotalism, the small store he set by any personal comfort or luxury, his powers of long-continued work, his indifference to the pleasures and amusements of his age, so far as Manchester could provide them. They were a reflection upon her, and many a gibe she had flung out at him about them. But all the same these ways of his had left a mark upon her; they had rooted a certain conception of him in her mind. She knew perfectly well that Dora Lomax was in love with him, and what did he care? 'Not a ha'porth!' She had never seen him turn his head for any girl; and when he had shown himself sarcastic on the subject of her companions, she had cast about in vain for materials wherewith to retort.

And now! That he should fall in love with this French girl—that was natural enough; it had amused and pleased her to see him lose his head and make a fool of himself like other people; but that he should run away with her after a fortnight, without apparently a word of marrying her—leaving his sister in the lurch——

'*Hypocrite!*'

She clenched her hands as she walked. What was really surging in her was that feeling of *ownership* with regard to David which had played so large a part in their childhood, even when she had teased and plagued him most. She might worry and defy him; but no sooner did another woman appropriate him,

threaten to terminate for good that hold of his sister upon him which had been so lately renewed, than she was flooded with jealous rage. David had escaped her—he was hers no longer—he was Elise Delaunay's! Nothing that she did could scandalise or make him angry any more. He had sent her money and washed his hands of her. As to his escorting her back to England in two or three weeks, that was just a lie! A man who takes such a plunge does not emerge so soon or so easily. No, she would have to go back by herself, leaving him to his intrigue. The very calmness and secretiveness of his letter was an insult. 'Mind your own business, little girl—go home to work—and be good!'—that was what it seemed to say to her. She set her teeth over it in her wild anger and pride.

At the same moment the outer door opened and Madame Cervin came bustling back again, bursting with news and indignation.

Oh, there was no doubt at all about it, they had gone off together! Madame Merichat had seen them come downstairs about noon the day before. He was carrying a black bag and a couple of parcels. She also was laden; and about halfway down the street, Madame Merichat, watching from her window, had seen them hail a cab, get into it, and drive away, the cab turning to the right when they reached the Boulevard.

Madame Cervin's wrath was loud, and stimulated moreover by personal alarm. One moment, remembering the scene in Montjoie's studio, she cried out, like the sister, on the brother's hypocrisy; the next she reminded her boarder that there was two weeks' *pension* owing.

Louie smiled scornfully, drew out the notes from David's letter and flung them on the table. Then Madame Cervin softened, and took occasion to remem-

ber that condolence with the sister was at least as appropriate to the situation as abuse of the brother. She attempted some consolation, nay, even some caresses, but Louie very soon shook her off.

'Don't talk to me! don't kiss me!' she said impatiently.

And she swept out of the room, went to her own, and locked the door. There she threw herself face downwards on her bed, and remained there for some time hardly moving. But with every minute that passed, as it seemed, the inward smart grew sharper. She had been hardly conscious of it, at first, this smart, in her rage and pride, but it was there.

At last she could bear it quietly no longer. She sprang up and looked about her. There, just inside the open press which held her wardrobe, were some soft white folds of stuff. Her eye gleamed: she ran to the cupboard and took out the Mænad's dress. During the last few days she had somewhat tired of the sittings—she had at any rate been capricious and tiresome about them; and Montjoie, who was more in earnest about this statue than he had been about any work for years, was at his wit's end, first to control his own temper, and next so to lure or drive his strange sitter as to manage her without offending her.

But to-day the dress recalled David—promised distraction and retaliation. She slipped off her tight gingham with hasty fingers, and in a few seconds she was transformed. The light folds floated about her as she walked impetuously up and down, studying every movement in the glass, intoxicated by the polished clearness and whiteness of her own neck and shoulders, the curves of her own grace and youth. Many a night, even after a long sitting, had she locked

her door, made the gas flare, and sat absorbed before her mirror in this guise, throwing herself into one attitude after another, naïvely regretting that sculpture took so long, and that Montjoie could not fix them all. The ecstasy of self-worship in which the whole process issued was but the fruition of that childish habit which had wrought with childish things for the same end—with a couple of rushlights, an old sheet and primroses from the brook.

Her black abundant hair was still curled about her head. Well, she could pull it down in the studio—now for a wrap—and then no noise! She would slip downstairs so that madame should know nothing about it. She was tired of that woman always at her elbow. Let her go marketing and leave other people in peace.

But before she threw on her wrap she stood still a moment, her nostril quivering, expanding, one hand on her hip, the other swinging her Mænad's tambourine. She knew very little of this sculptor-man—she did not understand him; but he interested, to some extent overawed, her. He had poured out upon her the coarsest flatteries, yet she realised that he had not made love to her. Perhaps Madame Cervin had been in the way. Well, now for a surprise and a *tête-à-tête*! A dare-devil look—her mother's look—sprang into her eyes.

She opened the door, and listened. No one in the little passage, only a distant sound of rapid talking, which suggested to the girl that madame was at that moment enjoying the discussion of her boarder's affairs with monsieur, who was still in bed. She hurried on a waterproof which covered her almost from top to toe. Then, holding up her draperies, she stole out, and on to the public stairs.

They were deserted, and running down them she

turned to the right at the bottom and soon found herself at the high studio door.

As she raised her hand to the bell she flushed with passion.

'I'll let him see whether I'll go home whining to Dora, while he's amusing himself,' she said under her breath.

The door was opened to her by Montjoie himself, in his working blouse, a cigarette in his mouth. His hands and dress were daubed with clay, and he had the brutal look of a man in the blackest of tempers. But no sooner did he perceive Louie Grieve's stately figure in the passage than his expression changed.

'You—you here! and for a sitting?'

She nodded, smiling. Her look had an excitement which he perceived at once. His eye travelled to the white drapery and the beautiful bare arm emerging from the cloak; then he looked behind her for Madame Cervin.

No one—except this Mænad in a waterproof. Montjoie threw away his cigarette.

'*Entrez, entrez, mademoiselle!*' he said, bowing low to her. 'When the heavens are blackest, then they open. I was in a mind to wring the Mænad's neck three minutes ago. Come and save your portrait!'

He led her in through the ante-room into the large outer studio. There stood the Mænad on her revolving stand, and there was the raised platform for the model. A heap of clay was to one side, and water was dripping from the statue on to the floor. The studio light had a clear evenness; and, after the heat outside, the coolness of the great bare room was refreshing.

They stood and looked at the statue together, Louie still in her cloak. Montjoie pointed out to her that he was at work on the shoulders and the left arm, and

was driven mad by the difficulties of the pose. '*Tonnerre de Dieu!* when I heard you knock, I felt like a murderer; I rushed out to let fly at someone. And there was my Mænad on the mat!—all by herself, too, without that little piece of ugliness from upstairs behind her. I little thought this day—this cursed day—was to turn out so. I thought you were tired of the poor sculptor—that you had deserted him for good and all. Ah! *déesse—je vous salue!*'

He drew back from her, scanning her from head to foot, a new tone in his voice, a new boldness in his deep-set eyes—eyes which were already old. Louie stood instinctively shrinking, yet smiling, understanding something of what he said, guessing more.

There was a bull-necked strength about the man, with his dark, square, weather-beaten head, and black eyebrows, which made her afraid, in spite of the smooth and deprecating manner in which he generally spoke to women. But her fear of him was not unpleasant to her. She liked him; she would have liked above all to quarrel with him; she felt that he was her match.

He stepped forward, touched her arm, and took a tone of command.

'Quick, mademoiselle, with that cloak!'

She mounted the steps, threw off her cloak, and fell into her attitude without an instant's hesitation. Montjoie, putting his hands over his eyes to look at her, exclaimed under his breath.

It was perfectly true that, libertine as he was, he had so far felt no inclination whatever to make love to the English girl. Nor was the effect merely the result of Madame Cervin's vigilance. Personally, for all her extraordinary beauty, his new model left him cold. Originally he had been a man of the most complex artistic instincts, the most delicate and varied

perceptions. They and his craftsman's skill were all foundering now in a sea of evil living. But occasionally they were active still, and they had served him for the instant detection of that common egotistical paste of which Louie Grieve was made. He would have liked to chain her to his model's platform, to make her the slave of his fevered degenerating art. But she had no thrill for him. While he was working from her his mind was often running on some little *grisette* or other, who had not half Louie Grieve's physical perfection, but who had charm, provocation, wit—all that makes the natural heritage of the French woman, of whatever class. At the same time it had been an irritation and an absurdity to him that, under Madame Cervin's eye, he had been compelled to treat her with the ceremonies due to *une jeune fille honnête*. For he had at once detected the girl's reckless temper. From what social stratum did she come—she and the brother? In her, at least, there was some wild blood! When he sounded Madame Cervin, however, she, with her incurable habit of vain mendacity, had only put her lodger in a light which Montjoie felt certain was a false one.

But this morning! Never had she been so superb, so inspiring! All the vindictive passion, all the rage with David that was surging within her, did but give the more daring and decision to her attitude, and a wilder power to her look. Moreover, the boldness of her unaccompanied visit to him provoked and challenged him. He looked at her irresolutely; then with an effort he turned to his statue and fell to work. The touch of the clay, the reaction from past despondency prevailed; before half an hour was over he was more enamoured of his task than he had ever yet been, and more fiercely bent on success. Insensibly as the time passed, his tone with her became more and more



short, brusque, imperious. Once or twice he made some rough alteration in the pose, with the overbearing haste of a man who can hardly bear to leave the work under his hands even for an instant. When he first assumed this manner Louie opened her great eyes. Then it seemed to please her. She felt no regret whatever for the smooth voice; the more dictatorial he became the better she liked it, and the more submissive she was.

This went on for about a couple of hours—an orgie of work on his side, of excited persistence on hers. Her rival in the clay grew in life and daring under her eyes, rousing in her, whenever she was allowed to rest a minute and look, a new intoxication with herself. They hardly talked. He was too much absorbed in what he was doing; and she also was either bent upon her task, or choked by wild gusts of jealous and revengeful thought. Every now and then as she stood there, in her attitude of eager listening, the wall of the studio would fade before her eyes, and she would see nothing but a torturing vision of David at Fontainebleau, wrapt up in 'that creature,' and only remembering his sister to rejoice that he had shaken her off. *Ah!* How could she sufficiently avenge herself! how could she throw all his canting counsels to the winds with most emphasis and effect!

At last a curious thing happened. Was it mere nervous reaction after such a strain of will and passion, or was it the sudden emergence of something in the sister which was also common to the brother—a certain tragic susceptibility, the capacity for a wild melancholy? For, in an instant, while she was thinking vaguely of Madame Cervin and her money affairs, *despair* seized her—shuddering, measureless despair—rushing in upon her, and sweeping away everything else before it. She tottered under it, fighting down

the clutch of it as long as she could. It had no words, it was like a physical agony. All that was clear to her for one lurid moment was that she would like to kill herself.

The studio swam before her, and she dropped into the chair behind her.

Montjoie gave a protesting cry.

'Twenty minutes more!—*Courage!*'

Then, as she made no answer, he went up to her and put a violent hand on her shoulder—beside himself.

'You *shall* not be tired, I tell you. Look up! look at me!'

Under the stimulus of his master's tone she slowly recovered herself—her great black eyes lifted. He gazed into them steadily; his voice sank.

'You belong to me,' he said with breathless rapidity. 'Do you understand? What is the matter with you? What are those tears?'

A cry of nature broke from her.

'My brother has left me—with that girl!'

She breathed out the words into the ears of the man stooping towards her. His great brow lifted—he gave a little laugh. Then eagerly, triumphantly, he seized her again by the arms. '*À la bonne heure!* Then it is plainer still. You belong to me and I to you. In that statue we live and die together. Another hour, and it will be a masterpiece. Come! one more!'

She drank in his tone of mad excitement as though it were wine, and it revived her. The strange grip upon her heart relaxed; the nightmare was dashed aside. Her colour came back, and, pushing him proudly away from her, she resumed her pose without a word.

## CHAPTER VIII

'Do you know, sir, that that good woman has brought in the soup for the second time? I can see her fidgeting about the table through the window. If we go on like this, she will depart and leave us to wait on ourselves. Then see if you get any soup out of *me*.'

David, for all answer, put his arm close round the speaker. She threw herself back against him, smiling into his face. But neither could see the other, for it was nearly dark, and through the acacia trees above them the stars glimmered in the warm sky. To their left, across a small grass-plot, was a tiny thatched house, buried under a great vine which embowered it all from top to base, and overhung by trees which drooped on to the roof, and swept the windows with their branches. Through a lower window, opening on to the gravel path, could be seen a small bare room, with a paper of coarse brown and blue pattern, brightly illuminated by a paraffin lamp, which also threw a square of light far out into the garden. The lamp stood on a table which was spread for a meal, and a stout woman, in a white cap and blue cotton apron, could be seen moving beside it.

'Come in!' said Elise, springing to her feet, and laying a compelling hand on her companion. 'Get it over! The moon is waiting for us out there!'

And she pointed to where, beyond the roofs of the neighbouring houses, rose the dark fringe of trees which marked the edge of the forest.

They went in, hand in hand, and sat opposite each other at the little rickety table, while the peasant woman from whom they had taken the house waited upon them. The day before, after looking at the

*auberge*, and finding it full of artists come down to look for spring subjects in the forest, they had wandered on searching for something less public, more poetical. And they had stumbled upon this tiny overgrown house in its tangled garden. The woman to whom it belonged had let it for the season, but till the beginning of her 'let' there was a month; and, after much persuasion, she had consented to allow the strangers to hire it and her services as *bonne*, by the week, for a sum more congruous with the old and primitive days of Barbizon than with the later claims of the little place to fashion and fame. As the lovers stood together in the *salon*, exclaiming with delight at its bare floor, its low ceiling, its old bureau, its hard sofa with the Empire legs, and the dilapidated sphinxes on the arms, the owner of the house looked them up and down, from the door, with comprehending eyes. Barbizon had known adventures like this before!

But she might think what she liked; it mattered nothing to her lodgers. To 'a pair of romantics out of date,' the queer overgrown place she owned was perfection, and they took possession of it in a dream of excitement and joy. From the top loft, still bare and echoing, where the highly respectable summer tenants were to put up the cots of their children, to the outside den which served for a kitchen, whence a wooden ladder led to a recess among the rafters, occupied by Madame Pyat as a bedroom; from the masses of Virginia creeper on the thatched roof to the thicket of acacias and roses on the front grass-plot, and the high flowery wall which shut them off from the curious eyes of the street, it was all, in the lovers' feeling, the predestined setting for such an idyll as theirs.

And if this was so in the hot mornings and after-

noons, how much more in the heavenly evenings and nights, when the forest lay whispering and murmuring under the moonlight, and they, wandering together arm in arm under the gaunt and twisted oaks of the Bas Bréau, or among the limestone blocks which strewed the heights of this strange woodland, felt themselves part of the world about them, dissolved into its quivering harmonious life, shades among its shadows!

On this particular evening, after the hurried and homely meal, David brought Elise's large black hat, and the lace scarf which had bewitched him at St. Germain—oh, the joy of handling such things in this familiar, sacrilegious way!—and they strolled out into the long uneven street beyond their garden-wall, on their way to the forest. The old inn to the left was in a clatter. Two *diligences* had just arrived, and the horses were drooping and panting at the door. A maidservant was lighting guests across the belittered courtyard with a flaring candle. There was a red glimpse of the kitchen with its brass and copper pans, and on the bench outside the gateway sat a silent trio of artists, who had worked well and dined abundantly, and were now enjoying their last smoke before the sleep, to which they were already nodding, should overtake them. The two lovers stepped quickly past, making with all haste for that leafy mystery beyond cleft by the retreating whiteness of the Fontainebleau road—into which the village melted on either side.

Such moonlight! All the tones of the street, its white and greys, the reddish brown of the roofs, were to be discerned under it; and outside in the forest it was a phantasmagoria, an intoxication. The little paths they were soon threading, paths strewn with limestone dust, wound like white threads among the rocks and through the blackness of the firs. They

climbed them hand in hand, and soon they were on a height looking over a great hollow of the forest to the plain beyond, as it were a vast cup overflowing with moonlight and melting into a silver sky. The width of the heavens, the dim immensity of the earth, drove them close together in a delicious silence. The girl put the warmth of her lover's arm between her and the overpowering greatness of a too august nature. The man, on the other hand, rising in this to that higher stature which was truly his, felt himself carried out into nature on the wave of his own boundless emotion. That cold Deism he had held so loosely broke into passion. The humblest phrases of worship, of entreaty, swept across the brain.

'Could one ever have guessed,' he asked her, his words stumbling and broken, 'that such happiness was possible?'

She shook her head, smiling at him.

'Yes, certainly!—if one has read poems and novels. Nothing to me is ever *more* than I expect,—generally less.'

Then she broke off hesitating, and hid her face against his breast. A pang smote him. He cried out in the old commonplaces that he was not worthy, that she must tire of him, that there was nothing in him to hold, to satisfy her.

'And three weeks ago,' she said, interrupting him, 'we had never heard each other's names. Strange—life is strange! Well, now,' and she quickly drew herself away from him, and holding him by both hands lightly swung his arms backwards and forwards, 'this can't last for ever, you know. In the first place—we shall *die*:' and throwing herself back, she pulled against him childishly, a spray of ivy he had wound round her hat drooping with fantastic shadows over her face and neck.

‘Do you know what you are like?’ he asked her, evading what she had said, while his eyes devoured her.

‘No!’

‘You are like that picture in the Louvre,—Da Vinci’s St. John, that you say should be a Bacchus.’

‘Which means that you find me a queer,—heathenish,—sort of creature?’ she said, still laughing and swaying. ‘So I am. Take care! Well now, a truce to love-making! I am tired of being meek and charming—this night excites me. Come and see the oaks in the Bas Bréau.’

And running down the rocky path before them she led him in and out through twisted leafy ways, till at last they stood among the blasted giants of the forest, the oaks of the Bas Bréau. In the emboldening daylight, David, with certain English wood scenes in his mind, would swear the famous trees of Fontainebleau had neither size nor age to speak of. But at night they laid their avenging spell upon him. They stood so finely on the broken ground, each of them with a kingly space about him; there was so wild a fantasy in their gnarled and broken limbs; and under the night their scanty crowns of leaf, from which the sap was yearly ebbing, had so lofty a remoteness.

They found a rocky seat in front of a certain leafless monster, which had been struck by lightning in a winter storm years before, and rent from top to bottom. The bare trunk with its torn branches yawning stood out against the rest, a black and melancholy shape, preaching desolation. But Elise studied it coolly.

‘I know that tree by heart,’ she declared. ‘Corot, Rousseau, Diaz—it has served them all. I could draw it with my eyes shut.’

Then with the mention of drawing she began to twist her fingers restlessly.

'I wonder what the *concours* was to-day,' she said. 'Now that I am away that Bréal girl will carry off everything. There will be no bearing her—she was never second till I came.'

David took a very scornful view of this contingency. 'When you go back you will beat them all again; let them have their few weeks' respite! You told me yesterday you had forgotten the *atelier*.'

'Did I?' she said with a strange little sigh. 'It wasn't true—I haven't.'

With a sudden whim she pulled off his broad hat and threw it down. Reaching forward she took his head between her hands, and arranged his black curls about his brow in a way to suit her. Then, still holding him, she drew back with her head on one side to look at him. The moon above them, now at its full zenith of brightness, threw the whole massive face into strong relief, and her own look melted into delight.

'There is no model in Paris,' she declared, 'with so fine a head.' Then with another sigh she dropped her hold, and propping her chin on her hands, she stared straight before her in silence.

'Do you imagine you are *the first*?' she asked him presently, with a queer abruptness.

There was a pause.

'You told me so,' he said, at last, his voice quivering; 'don't deceive me—there is no fun in it—I believe it all!'

She laughed, and did not answer for a moment. He put out his covetous arms and would have drawn her to him, but she withdrew herself.

'What did I tell you? I don't remember. In the first place there was a cousin—there is always a cousin!'

He stared at her, his face flushing, and asked her slowly what she meant.



'You have seen his portrait in my room,' she said coolly.

He racked his brains.

'Oh! that portrait on the wall,' he burst out at last, in vain trying for a tone as self-possessed as her own, 'that man with a short beard?'

She nodded.

'Oh, he is not bad at all, my cousin. He is the son of that uncle and aunt I told you of. Only while they were rusting in the Gironde, he was at Paris learning to be a doctor, and enlarging his mind by coming to see me every week. When they came up to town to put in a claim to me, *they* thought me a lump of wickedness, as I told you; I made their hair stand on end. But Guillaume knew a good deal more about me; and *he* was not scandalised at all; oh dear, no. He used to come every Saturday and sit in a corner while I painted—a long lanky creature, rather good-looking, but with spectacles—he has ruined his eyes with reading. Oh, he would have married me any day, and let his relations shriek as they please; so don't suppose, Monsieur David, that I have had no chances of respectability, or that my life began with you!' She threw him a curious look.

'Why do you talk about him?' cried David, beside himself. 'What is your cousin to either of us?'

'I shall talk of what I like,' she said wilfully, clasping her hands round her knees with the gesture of an obstinate child.

David stared away into the black shadow of the oaks, marvelling at himself—at the strength of that sudden smart within him, that half-frenzied restlessness and dread which some of her lightest sayings had the power to awaken in him.

Then he repented him, and turning, bent his head over the little hands and kissed them passionately.

She did not move or speak. He came close to her, trying to decipher her face in the moonlight. For the first time since that night in the studio there was a film of sudden tears in the wide grey eyes. He caught her in his arms and demanded why.

'You quarrel with me and dictate to me,' she cried, wrestling with herself, choked by some inexplicable emotion, 'when I have given you everything—when I am alone in the world with you—at your mercy—I who have been so proud, have held my head so high!'

He bent over her, pouring into her ear all the words that passion could find or forge. Her sudden attack upon him, poor fellow, seemed to him neither unjust nor extravagant. She *had* given him everything, and who and what was he that she should have thrown him so much as a look!

Gradually her mysterious irritation died away. The gentleness of the summer night, the serenity of the moonlight, the sea-like murmur of the forest—these things sank by little into their hearts, and in the calm they made, youth and love spoke again—siren voices!—with the old magic. And when at last they loitered home, they moved in a trance of feeling which wanted no words. The moon dropped slowly into the western trees; midnight chimes came to them from the villages which ring the forest; and a playing wind sprang up about them, cooling the girl's hot cheeks, and freshening the verdurous ways through which they passed.

But in the years which came after, whenever David allowed his mind to dwell for a short shuddering instant on these days at Fontainebleau, it often occurred to him to wonder whether during their wild dream he had ever for one hour been truly happy. At the height of their passion had there been any of that

exquisite give and take between them which may mark the simplest love of the rudest lovers, but which is in its essence moral, a thing not of the senses but of the soul? There is nothing else which is vital to love. Without it passion dies into space like the flaming corona of the sun. With it, the humblest hearts may 'bear it out even to the edge of doom.'

There can be no question that after the storm of feeling, excitement, pity, which had swept her into his arms, he gained upon her vagrant fancy for a time day by day. Seen close, his social simplicity, his delicately tempered youth had the effect of great refinement. He had in him much of the peasant nature, but so modified by fine perception and wide-ranging emotion, that what had been coarseness in his ancestors was in him only a certain rich savour and fulness of being. His mere sympathetic, sensitive instinct had developed in him all the essentials of good manners, and books, poetry, observation had done the rest.

So that in the little matters of daily contact he touched and charmed her unexpectedly. He threw no veil whatever over his tradesman's circumstances, and enjoyed trying to make her understand what had been the conditions and prospects of his Manchester life. He had always, indeed, conceived his book-seller's profession with a certain dignity; and he was secretly proud, with a natural conceit, of the efforts and ability which had brought him so rapidly to the front. How oddly the Manchester names and facts sounded in the forest air! She would sit with her little head on one side listening; but privately he suspected that she understood very little of it; that she accepted him and his resources very much in the vague with the *insouciance* of Bohemia.

He himself, however, was by no means without plans for the future. In the first flush of his trium-

phant passion he had won from her the promise of a month alone with him, in or near Fontainebleau—her own suggestion—after which she was to go back in earnest to her painting, and he was to return to Manchester and make arrangements for their future life together. Louie must be provided for, and after that his ideas about himself were already tolerably clear. In one of his free intervals, during his first days in Paris, he had had a long conversation one evening with the owner of an important bookshop on the Quai St.-Michel. The man badly wanted an English clerk with English connections. David made certain of the opening, should he choose to apply for it. And if not there, then somewhere else. With the consciousness of capital, experience, and brains, to justify him, he had no fears. Meanwhile, John should keep on the Manchester shop, and he, David, would go over two or three times a year to stock-take and make up accounts. John was as honest as the day, and had already learnt much.

But although his old self had so far reasserted itself; although the contriving activity of the brain was all still there, ready to be brought to bear on this new life when it was wanted; Elise could never mistake him, or the true character of this crisis of his youth. The self-surrender of passion had transformed, developed him to an amazing extent, and it found its natural language. As she grew deeper and deeper into the boy's heart, and as the cloud of diffidence which had enwrapped him since he came to Paris gave way, so that even in this brilliant France he ventured at last to express his feelings and ideas, the poet and thinker in him grew before her eyes. She felt a new consideration, a new intellectual respect for him.

But above all his tenderness, his womanish consideration and sweetness amazed her. She had been

hotly wooed now and then, but with no one, not even 'the cousin,' had she ever been on terms of real intimacy. And for the rest she had lived a rough-and-tumble, independent life, defending herself first of all against the big boys of the farm, then against her father, or her comrades in the *atelier*, or her Bohemian suitors. The ingenuity of service David showed in shielding and waiting upon her bewildered her—had, for a time, a profound effect upon her.

And yet!—all the while—what jars and terrors from the very beginning! He seemed often to be groping in the dark with her. Whole tracts of her thought and experience were mysteries to him, and grew but little plainer with their new relation. Little as he knew or would have admitted it, the gulf of nationality yawned deep between them. And those artistic ambitions of hers—as soon as they re-emerged on the other side of the first intoxication of passion—they were as much of a jealousy and a dread to him as before. His soul was as alive as it had ever been to the threat and peril of them.

Their relation itself, too—to her, perhaps, secretly a guarantee—was to him a perpetual restlessness. *L'union libre* as the French artist understands it was not in his social tradition, whatever might be his literary assimilation of French ideas. He might passionately adopt and defend it, because it was her will; none the less was he, at the bottom of his heart, both ashamed and afraid because of it. From the very beginning he had let her know that she had only to say the word and he was ready to marry her instantly. But she put him aside with an impatient wave of her little hand, a nervous, defiant look in her grey eyes. Yet one day, when in the little village shop of Barbizon, a woman standing beside Elise at the counter looked her

insolently over from head to foot, and took no notice of a question addressed to her on the subject of one of the forest routes, the girl felt an unexpected pang of resentment and shame.

One afternoon, in a lonely part of the forest, she strained her foot by treading on a loose stone among the rocks. Tired with long rambling and jarred by the shock she sank down, looking white and ready to cry. Pain generally crushed and demoralised her. She was capable, indeed, of setting the body at defiance on occasion; but, as a rule, she had no physical fortitude, and did not pretend to it.

David was much perplexed. So far as he knew, they were not near any of the huts which are dotted over the forest and provide the tourist with *consommations* and carved articles. There was no water wherewith to revive her or to bandage the foot, for Fontainebleau has no streams. All he could do was to carry her. And this he did, with the utmost skill, and with a leaping thrill of tenderness which made itself felt by the little elfish creature in the clasp of his arms, and in the happy leaning of his dark cheek to hers, as she held him round the neck.

‘Paul and Virginia!’ she said to him, laughing. “*He bore her in his arms!*”—all heroes do it—in reality, most women would break the hero’s back. Confess *I* am even lighter than you thought!’

‘As light as Venus’ doves,’ he swore to her. ‘Bid me carry you to Paris and see.’

‘Paris!’ At the mention of it she fell silent, and the corners of her mouth drooped into gravity. But he strode happily on, perceiving nothing.

Then when they got home, she limping through the village, he put on the airs of a surgeon, ran across to

the grocer, who kept a tiny *pharmacie* in one corner of his miscellaneous shop, and conferred with him to such effect that the injured limb was soon lotioned and bandaged in a manner which made David inordinately proud of himself. Once, as he was examining his handiwork, it occurred to him that it was Mr. Ancrum who had taught him to use his fingers neatly. *Mr. Ancrum!* At the thought of his name the young man felt an inward shrinking, as though from contact with a cold and alien order of things. How hard to realise, indeed, that the same world contained Manchester with its factories and chapels, and this perfumed forest, this little overgrown house!

Afterwards, as he sat beside her, reading, as quiet as a mouse, so that she might sleep if the tumble-down Empire sofa did but woo her that way, she suddenly put up her arm and drew him down to her.

'Who taught you all this—this tenderness?' she said to him, in a curious wistful tone, as though her question were the outcome of a long reverie. 'Was it your mother?'

David started. He had never spoken to her or to anyone of his mother, and he could not bring himself to do so now.

'My mother died when I was five years old,' he said reluctantly. 'Why don't you go to sleep, little restless thing? Is the bandage right?'

'Quite. I can imagine,' she said presently in a low tone, letting him go, 'I can imagine one might grow so dependent on all this cherishing, so horribly dependent!'

'Well, and why not?' he said, taking up her hand and kissing it. 'What are we made for, but to be your bondslaves?'

She drew her hand away, and let it fall beside her with an impatient sigh. The poor boy looked at her

with frightened eyes. Then some quick instinct came to the rescue, and his expression changed completely.

'I have thought it all out,' he began, speaking with a brisk, business-like air, 'what I shall do at Manchester, and when I get back here.'

And he hung over her, chattering and laughing about his plans. What did she say to a garret and a studio somewhere near the Quai St.-Michel, in the Quartier Latin, rooms whence they might catch a glimpse of the Seine and Notre-Dame, where she would be within easy reach of Taranne's studio, and the Luxembourg, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and the Louvre, rooms where after their day's work they might meet, shut out the world and let in heaven—a home consecrate at once to art and love?

The quick bright words flowed without a check; his eye shone as though it caught the light of the future. But she lay turned away from him, silent, till at last she stopped him with a restless gesture.

'Don't—don't talk like that! As soon as one dares to reckon on Him—*le bon Dieu* strikes—just to let one know one's place. And don't drive me mad about my art! You saw me try to draw this morning; you might be quiet about it, I think, *par pitié!* If I ever had any talent—which is not likely, or I should have had some notices of my pictures by this time—it is all dead and done for.'

And turning quite away from him, she buried her face in the cushion.

'Look here,' he said to her, smiling and stooping, 'shall I tell you something? I forgot it till now.'

She shook her head, but he went on:

'You remember this morning while I was waiting for you, I went into the inn to ask about the way to the Gorges d'Affremont. I had your painting things with me. I didn't know whether you wanted them or



not, and I laid them down on the table in the *cour*, while I went in to speak to madame. Well, when I came out, there were a couple of artists there, those men who have been here all the time painting, and they had undone the strap and were looking at the sketch—you know, that bit of beechwood with the rain coming on. I rushed at them. But they only grinned, and one of them, the young man with the fair moustache, sent you his compliments. You must have, he said, “very remarkable dispositions indeed.” Perhaps I looked as if I knew that before! Whose pupil were you? I told him, and he said I was to tell you to stick to Taranne. You were one of the *peintres de tempérament*, and it was they especially who must learn their grammar, and learn it from the classics; and the other man, the old bear who never speaks to anybody, nodded and looked at the sketch again, and said it was “amusing—not bad at all,” and you might make something of it for the next Salon.’

Cunning David! By this time Elise had her arm round his neck, and was devouring his face with her keen eyes. Everything was shaken off—the pain of her foot, melancholy, fatigue—and all the horizons of the soul were bright again. She had a new idea!—what if she were to combine his portrait with the beechwood sketch, and make something large and important of it? He had the head of a poet—the forest was in its most poetical moment. Why not pose him at the foot of the great beech to the left, give him a book dropping from his hand, and call it ‘*Rêverie*’?

For the rest of the day she talked or sketched incessantly. She would hardly be persuaded to give her bandaged foot the afternoon’s rest, and by eight o’clock next morning they were off to the forest, she limping along with a stick.

Two or three days of perfect bliss followed. The

picture promised excellently. Elise was in the most hopeful mood, alert and merry as a bird. And when they were driven home by hunger, the work still went on. For they had turned their top attic into a studio, and here as long as the light lasted she toiled on, wrestling with the head and the difficulties of the figure. But she was determined to make it substantially a picture *en plein air*. Her mind was full of all the daring conceptions and ideals which were then emerging in art, as in literature, from the decline of Romanticism. The passion for light, for truth, was, she declared, penetrating, and revolutionising the whole artistic world. Delacroix had a studio to the south; she also would 'bedare the sun.'

At the end of the third day she threw herself on him in a passion of gratitude and delight, lifting her soft mouth to be kissed.

*'Embrasse-moi! Embrasse-moi! Blague à part,—je commence à me sentir artiste!'*

And they wandered about their little garden till past midnight, hand close in hand. She could talk of nothing but her picture, and he, feeling himself doubly necessary and delightful to her, overflowed with happiness and praise.

But next day things went less well. She was torn, overcome by the difficulties of her task. Working now in the forest, now at home, the lights and values had suffered. The general tone had neither an indoor nor an outdoor truth. She must repaint certain parts, work only out of doors. Then all the torments of the outdoor painter began: wind, which put her in a nervous fever, and rain, which, after the long spell of fine weather, began to come down on them, and drive them into shelter.

Soon she was in despair. She had been too ambitious. The landscape should have been the principal

thing, the figure only indicated, a suggestion in the middle distance. She had carried it too far; it fought with its surroundings; the picture had no unity, no repose. Oh, for some advice! How could one pull such a thing through without help? In three minutes Taranne would tell her what was wrong.

In twenty-four hours more she had fretted herself ill. The picture was there in the corner, turned to the wall; he could only just prevent her from driving her palette-knife through it. And she was sitting on the edge of the sofa, silent, a book on her knee, her hands hanging beside her, and her feverish eyes wandering—wandering round the room, if only they might escape from David, might avoid seeing him—or so he believed. Horrible! It was borne in upon him that in this moment of despair he was little more to her than the witness, the occasion, of her discomfiture.

Oh! his heart was sore. But he could do nothing. Caresses, encouragements, reproaches, were alike useless. For some time she would make no further attempts at drawing; nor would she be wooed and comforted. She held him passively at arm's length, and he could make nothing of her. It was the middle of their third week; still almost the half left of this month she had promised him. And already it was clear to him that he and love had lost their first hold, and that she was consumed with the unspoken wish to go back to Paris, and the *atelier*. Ah, no!—no! With a fierce yet dumb tenacity he held her to her bargain. Those weeks were his; they represented his only hope for the future; she *should* not have them back.

But he, too, fell into melancholy and silence, and on the afternoon when this change in him first showed itself she was, for a time, touched, ashamed. A few pale smiles returned for him, and in the evening, as he was sitting by the open window, a newspaper on

his knee, staring into vacancy, she came up to him, knelt beside him, and drew his half-reluctant arm about her. Neither said anything, but gradually her presence there, on his breast, thrilled through all his veins, filled his heart to bursting. The paper slid away; he put both arms about her, and bowed his head on hers. She put up her small hand, and felt the tears on his cheek. Then a still stronger repentance woke up in her.

'*Pauvre enfant!*' she said, pushing herself away from him, and tremulously drying his eyes. 'Poor Monsieur David—I make you very unhappy! But I warned you—oh, I *warned* you! What evil star made you fall in love with me?'

In answer he found such plaintive and passionate things to say to her that she was fairly melted, and in the end there was an effusion on both sides, which seemed to bring back their golden hours. But at bottom, David's sensitive instinct, do what he would to silence it, told him, in truth, that all was changed. He was no longer the happy and triumphant lover. He was the beggar, living upon her alms.

## CHAPTER IX

NEXT morning David went across to the village shop to buy some daily necessities, and found a few newspapers lying on the counter. He bought a *Débats*, seeing that there was a long critique of the Salon in it, and hurried home with it to Elise. She tore it open and rushed through the article, putting him aside that he might not look over her. Her face blanched as she read, and at the end she flung the paper from her, and tottering to a chair sat there

motionless, staring straight before her. David, beside himself with alarm, and finding caresses of no avail, took up the paper from the floor.

'Let it alone!' she said to him with a sudden imperious gesture. 'There is a whole paragraph about Bréal—her fortune is made. *La voilà lancée—arrivée!* And of me, not a line, not a mention! Three or four pupils of Taranne—all beginners—but *my* name—nowhere! Ah, but no—it is too much!'

Her little foot beat the ground, a hurricane was rising within her.

David tried to laugh the matter off. 'The man who wrote the wretched thing had been hurried—was an idiot, clearly, and what did one man's opinion matter, even if it were paid for at so much a column?'

'*Mais, tais-toi donc!*' she cried at last, turning upon him in a fury. 'Can't you see that everything for an artist—especially a woman—depends on the *protections* she gets at the beginning? How can a girl—helpless—without friends—make her way by herself? Some one must hold out a hand, and for me it seems there is no one—no one!'

The outburst seemed to his common sense to imply the most grotesque oblivion of her success in the Salon, of Taranne's kindness—the most grotesque sensitiveness to a few casual lines of print. But it wrung his heart to see her agitation, her pale face, the handkerchief she was twisting to shreds in her restless hands. He came to plead with her—his passion lending him eloquence. Let her but trust herself and her gift. She had the praise of those she revered to go upon. How should the carelessness of a single critic affect her? *Imbéciles!*—they would be all with her, at her feet, some day. Let her despise them then and now! But his extravagances only made her impatient.

'Nonsense!' she said, drawing her hand away from

him; 'I am not made of such superfine stuff—I never pretended to be! Do you think I should be content to be an unknown genius? *Never!*—I must have my fame counted out to me in good current coin, that all the world may hear and see. It may be vulgar—I don't care! it is so. *Ah, mon Dieu!*' and she began to pace the room with wild steps, 'and it is my fault—my fault! If I were there on the spot, I should be remembered—they would have to reckon with me—I could keep my claim in sight. But I have thrown away everything—wasted everything—*everything!*'

He stood with his back to the window, motionless, his hand on the table, stooping a little forward, looking at her with a passion of reproach and misery; it only angered her; she lost all self-control, and in one mad moment she avenged on his poor heart all the wounds and vexations of her vanity. *Why* had he ever persuaded her? *Why* had he brought her away and hung a fresh burden on her life which she could never bear? *Why* had he done her this irreparable injury—taken all simplicity and directness of aim from her—weakened her energies at their source? Her only *milieu* was art, and he had made her desert it; her only power was the painter's power, and it was crippled, the fresh spring of it was gone. It was because she felt on her the weight of a responsibility, and a claim she was not made for. She was not made for love—for love at least as he understood it. And he had her word, and would hold her to it. It was madness for both of them. It was stifling—killing her!

Then she sank on a chair, in a passion of desperate tears. Suddenly, as she sat there, she heard a movement, and looking up she saw David at the door. He turned upon her for an instant, with a dignity so tragic, so true, and yet so young, that she was per-

force touched, arrested. She held out a trembling hand, made a little cry. But he closed the door softly, and was gone. She half raised herself, then fell back again.

‘If he had beaten me,’ she said to herself with a strange smile, ‘I could have loved him. *Mais!*’

She was all day alone. When he came back it was already evening; the stars shone in the June sky, but the sunset light was still in the street and on the upper windows of the little house. As he opened the garden gate and shut it behind him, he saw the gleam of a lamp behind the acacia, and a light figure beside it. He stood a moment wrestling with himself, for he was wearied out, and felt as if he could bear no more. Then he moved slowly on.

Elise was sitting beside the lamp, her head bent over something dark upon her lap. She had not heard the gate open, and she did not hear his steps upon the grass. He came closer, and saw, to his amazement, that she was busy with a coat of his—an old coat, in the sleeve of which he had torn a great rent the day before, while he was dragging her and himself through some underwood in the forest. She—who loathed all womanly arts, who had often boasted to him that she hardly knew how to use a needle!

In moving nearer, he brushed against the shrubs, and she heard him. She turned her head, smiling. In the mingled light she looked like a little white ghost, she was so pale and her eyes so heavy. When she saw him, she raised her finger with a childish, aggrieved air, and put it to her lips, rubbing it softly against them.

‘It does prick so!’ she said plaintively.

He came to sit beside her, his chest heaving.

‘Why do you do that—for me?’

She shrugged her shoulders and worked on without

speaking. Presently she laid down her needle and surveyed him.

'Where have you been all day? Have you eaten nothing, poor friend?'

He tried to remember.

'I think not; I have been in the forest.'

A little quiver ran over her face; she pulled at her needle violently and broke the thread.

'Finished!' she said, throwing down the coat and springing up. 'Don't tell your tailor who did it! I am for perfection in all things—*à bas l'amateur!* Come in, it is supper-time past. I will go and hurry Madame Pyat. *Tu dois avoir une faim de loup.*'

He shook his head, smiling sadly.

'I tell you, you *are* hungry, you *shall* be hungry!' she cried, suddenly flinging her arm round his neck, and nestling her fair head against his shoulder. Her voice was half a sob.

'Oh, so I am!—so I am!' he said, with a wild emphasis, and would have caught her to him. But she slipped away and ran before him to the house, turning at the window with the sweetest, frankest gesture to bid him follow.

They passed the evening close together, she on a stool leaning against his knee, he reading aloud Alfred de Musset's *Nuit de Mai*. At one moment she was all absorbed in the verse, carried away by it; great battle-cry that it is! calling the artist from the miseries of his own petty fate to the lordship of life and nature as a whole; the next she had snatched the book out of his hands and was correcting his accent, bidding him speak after her, put his lips so. Never had she been so charming. It was the coaxing charm of the softened child that cannot show its penitence enough. Every now and then she fell to pouting because she could not move him to gaiety. But in reality his sad



and passive gentleness, the mask of feelings which would otherwise have been altogether beyond his control, served him with her better than any gaiety could have done.

*Gaiety!* it seemed to him his heart was broken.

At night, after a troubled sleep, he suddenly woke, and sprang up in an agony. *Gone!* was she gone already? For that was what her sweet ways meant. Ah, he had known it all along!

Where was she? His wild eyes for a second or two saw nothing but the landscape of his desolate dream. Then gradually the familiar forms of the room emerged from the gloom, and there—against the further wall—she lay, so still, so white, so gracious! Her childish arm, bare to the elbow, was thrown round her head, her soft waves of hair made a confusion on the pillow. After her long day of emotion she was sleeping profoundly. Whatever cruel secret her heart might hold, she was there still, his yet, for a few hours and days. He was persuaded in his own mind that her penitence had been the mere fruit of a compromise with herself, their month had still eight days to run, then—*adieu!* Art and liberty should reclaim their own. Meanwhile why torment the poor boy, who must any way take it hardly?

He lay there for long, raised upon his arm, his haggard look fixed on the sleeping form which by-and-by the dawn illuminated. His life was concentrated in that form, that light breath. He thought with repulsion and loathing of all that had befallen him before he saw her—with anguish and terror of those days and nights to come when he should have lost her. For in the deep stillness of the rising day there fell on him the strangest certainty of this loss. That gift of tragic prescience which was in his blood had stirred in him—he knew his fate. Perhaps the gift itself

was but the fruit of a rare power of self-vision, self-appraisalment. He saw and cursed his own timid and ignorant youth. How could he ever have hoped to hold a creature of such complex needs and passions? In the pale dawn he sounded the very depths of self-contempt.

But when the day was up and Elise was chattering and flitting about the house as usual without a word of discord or parting, how was it possible to avoid reaction, the re-birth of hope? She talked of painting again, and that alone, after these long days of sullen alienation from her art, was enough to bring the brightness back to their little *ménage* and to dull that strange second sight of David's. He helped her to set her palette, to choose a new canvas; he packed her charcoals, he beguiled some cold meat and bread out of Madame, and then before the heat they set out together for the Bas Bréau.

Just as they started he searched his pockets for a knife of hers which was missing, and thrusting his hand into a breast pocket which he seldom used, he brought out some papers at which he stared in bewilderment.

Then a shock went through him; for there was Mr. Gurney's letter, the letter in which the cheque for 600*l.* had been enclosed, and there was also that faded scrap of Sandy's writing which contained the father's last injunction to his son. As he held the papers he remembered—what he had forgotten for weeks—that on the morning of his leaving Manchester he had put them carefully into this breast pocket, not liking to leave things so interesting to him behind him, out of his reach. Never had he given a thought to them since! He looked down at them, half ashamed, and his eye caught the words:—'*I lay it on him now I'm*

*dying to look after her. She's not like other children; she'll want it. Let him see her married to a decent man, and give her what's honestly hers. I trust it to him. That little lad——'* and then came the fold of the sheet.

'I have found the knife,' cried Elise from the gate. 'Be quick!'

He pushed the papers back and joined her. The day was already hot, and they hurried along the burning street into the shade of the forest. Once in the Bas Bréau Elise was not long in finding a subject, fell upon a promising one indeed almost at once, and was soon at work. This time there were to be no figures, unless indeed it might be a dim pair of woodcutters in the middle distance, and the whole picture was to be an impressionist dream of early summer, finished entirely out of doors, as rapidly and cleanly as possible. David lay on the ground under the blasted oak and watched her, as she sat on her camp-stool, bending forward, looking now up, now down, using her charcoal in bold energetic strokes, her lip compressed, her brow knit over some point of composition. The little figure in its pink cotton was so daintily pretty, so full of interest and wilful charm, it might well have filled a lover's eye and chained his thoughts. But David was restless and at times absent.

'Tell me what you know of that man Montjoie?' he asked her at last, abruptly. 'I know you disliked him.'

She paused, astonished.

'Why do you ask? Dislike—I *detest and despise* him. I told you so.'

'But what do you know of him?' he persisted.

'No good!' she said quickly, going back to her work. Then a light broke upon her, and she turned on her stool, her two hands on her knees.

'*Tiens!*—you are thinking of your sister. You have had news of her?'

A conscious half-remorseful look rose into her face.

'No, I have had no news. I ought to have had a letter. I wrote, you remember, that first day here. Perhaps Louie has gone home already,' he said, with constraint. 'Tell me anyway what you know.'

'Oh, he!—well, there is only one word for him—he is a *brute!*' said Elise, drawing vigorously, her colour rising. 'Any woman will tell you that. Oh, he has plenty of talent,—he might be anything. Carpeaux took him up at one time, got him commissions. Five or six years ago there was quite a noise about him for two or three Salons. Then people began to drop him. I believe he was the most mean, ungrateful animal towards those who had been kind to him. He drinks besides—he is over head and ears in debt, always wanting money, borrowing here and there, then locking his door for weeks, making believe to be out of town—only going out at night. As for his ways with women'—she shrugged her shoulders—'Was your sister still sitting to him when we left, or was it at an end? Hasn't your sister been sitting to him for his statue?'

She paused again and studied him with her shrewd, bright eyes.

He coloured angrily.

'I believe so—I tried to stop it—it was no use.'

She laughed out.

'No—I imagine she does what she wants to do. Well, we all do, *mon ami!* After all'—and she shrugged her shoulders again—'I suppose she can do what I did?'

'What *you* did!'

She went on drawing in sharp deliberate strokes; her breath came fast.

‘He met me on the stairs one night—it was just after I had taken the *atelier*. I knew no one in the house—I was quite defenceless there. He insulted me—I had a little walking-stick in my hand, my cousin had given me—I struck him with it across the face twice, three times—if you look close you will see the mark. You may imagine he tells fine stories of me when he gets the chance. *Oh! je m’en fiche!*’

The scorn of the last gesture was unmeasured.

‘*Canaille!*’ said David, between his teeth. ‘If you had told me this!’

Her expression changed and softened.

‘You asked me no questions after that quarrel we had in the Louvre,’ she said, excusing herself. ‘You will understand it is not a reminiscence one is exactly proud of; I did speak to Madame Cervin once——’

David said nothing, but sat staring before him into the far vistas of the wood. It seemed strange that so great a smart and fear as had possessed him since yesterday, should allow of any lesser smart within or near it. Yet that scrap of tremulous writing weighed heavy. *Where* was Louie; why had she not written? So far he had turned impatiently away from the thought of her, reiterating that he had done his best, that she had chosen her own path. Now in this fragrant quiet of the forest the quick vision of some irretrievable wreck presented itself to him; he thought of Mr. Ancrum—of John—and a cold shudder ran through him. In it spoke the conscience of a lifetime.

Elise meanwhile laid aside her charcoal, began to dash in some paint, drew back presently to look at it from a distance, and then, glancing aside, suddenly threw down her brushes, and ran up to David.

She sat down beside him, and with a coaxing, childish gesture, drew his arm about her.

'*Tu me fais pitié, mon ami!*' she said, looking up into his face. 'Is it your sister? Go and find her—I will wait for you.'

He turned upon her, his black eyes all passion, his lips struggling with speech.

'My place is here,' he said. 'My life is here!'

Then, as she was silent, not knowing in her agitation what to say, he broke out:

'What was in your mind yesterday, Elise? what is there to-day? There is something—something I *will* know.'

She was frightened by his look. Never did fear and grief speak more plainly from a human face. The great deep within had broken up.

'I was sorry,' she said, trembling, 'sorry to have hurt you. I wanted to make up.'

He flung her hand away from him with an impatient gesture.

'There was more than that!' he said violently; 'will you be like all the rest—betray me without a sign?'

'David!'

She bit her lip proudly. Then the tears welled up into her grey eyes, and she looked round at him—hesitated—began and stopped again—then broke into irrevocable confession.

'David!—Monsieur David!—how can it go on? *Voyons*—I said to myself yesterday—I am torturing him and myself—I *cannot* make him happy—it is not in me—not in my destiny. It must end—it must,—it *must*, for both our sakes. But then first,—first——'

'Be quiet!' he said, laying an iron hand on her arm. 'I knew it all.'

And he turned away from her, covering his face.

This time she made no attempt to caress him. She clasped her hands round her knees and remained quite still, gazing—yet seeing nothing—into the green

depths which five minutes before had been to her a torturing ecstasy of colour and light. The tears which had been gathering fell, the delicate lip quivered.

Struck by her silence at last, he looked up—watched her a moment—then he dragged himself up to her and knelt beside her.

‘Have I made you so miserable?’ he said, under his breath.

‘It is—it is—the irreparableness of it all,’ she answered, half sobbing. ‘No undoing it ever, and how a woman glides into it, how lightly, knowing so little!—thinking herself so wise! And if she has deceived herself, if she is not made for love, if she has given herself for so little—for an illusion—for a dream that breaks and must break—how dare the *man* reproach her, after all?’

She raised her burning eyes to him. The resentment in them seemed to be more than individual, it was the resentment of the woman, of her sex.

She stabbed him to the heart by what she said—by what she left unsaid. He took her little cold hand, put it to his lips—tried to speak.

‘Don’t,’ she said, drawing it away and hiding her face on her knees. ‘Don’t say anything. It is not you, it is God and Nature that I accuse.’

Strange, bitter word!—word of revolt! He lay on his face beside her for many minutes afterwards, tasting the bitterness of it, revolving those other words she had said—‘*an illusion—a dream that breaks—must break.*’ Then he made a last effort. He came close to her, laid his arm timidly round her shoulders, bent his cheek to hers.

‘Elise, listen to me a little. You say the debt is on my side—that is true—true—a thousand times true! I only ask you, *implore* you, to let me pay it. Let it be as you please—on what terms you please—

servant or lover. All I pray for is to pay that debt, with my life, my heart.'

She shook her head softly, her face still hidden.

'When I am with you,' she said, as though the words were wrung out of her, 'I must be a woman. You agitate me, you divide my mind, and my force goes. There are both capacities in me, and one destroys the other. And I want—I *want* my art!'

She threw back her head with a superb gesture. But he did not flinch.

'You shall have it,' he said passionately, 'have it abundantly. Do you think I want to keep you for ever loitering here? Do you think I don't know what ambition and will mean? that I am only fit for kissing?'

He stopped almost with a smile, thinking of that harsh struggle to know and to have, in which his youth had been so far consumed night and day. Then words rushed upon him again, and he went on with a growing power and freedom.

'I never looked at a woman till I saw you!—never had a whim, a caprice. I have eaten my heart out with the struggle first for bread, then for knowledge. But when you came across me, then the world was all made new, and I became a new creature, your creature.'

He touched her face with a quick, tender hand, laid it against his breast, and spoke so, bending piteously down to her, within reach of her quivering mouth, her moist eyes:—

'Tell me this, Elise—answer me this! How can there be great art, great knowledge, only from the brain,—without passion, without experience? You and I have been *living* what Musset, what Hugo, what Shakespeare wrote,' and he struck the little volume of Musset beside him. 'Is not that worth a summer



month? not worth the artist's while? But it is nearly gone. You can't wonder that I count the moments of it like a miser! I have had a *hard* life, and this has transfigured it. Whatever happens now in time or eternity, this month is to the good—for me and for you, Elise!—yes, for you, too! But when it is over,—see if I hold you back! We will work together—climb—wrestle, together. And on what terms you please,—mind that,—only dictate them. I deny your “illusion,” your “dream that breaks.” You *have* been happy! I dare to tell you so. But part now,—shirk our common destiny,—and you will indeed have given all for nothing, while I——’

His voice sank. She shook her head again, but as she drew herself gently away she was stabbed by the haggardness of the countenance, the pleading pathos of the eyes. His gust of speech had shaken her too—revealed new points in him. She bent forward quickly and laid her soft lips to his, for one light swift moment.

‘Poor boy!’ she murmured, ‘poor poet!’

‘Ah, that was enough!’ he said, the colour flooding his cheeks. ‘That healed—that made all good. Will you hide nothing from me, Elise—will you promise?’

‘Anything,’ she said with a curious accent, ‘anything—if you will but let me paint.’

He sprang up, and put her things in order for her. They stood looking at the sketch, neither seeing much of it.

‘I must have some more cobalt,’ she said wearily. ‘Look, my tube is nearly done.’

Yes, that was certain. He must get some more for her. Where could it be got? No nearer than Fontainebleau, alas! where there was a shop which provided all the artists of the neighbourhood. He was eagerly ready to go—it would take him no time.

'It will take you between two and three hours, sir, in this heat. But oh, I am so tired, I will just creep into the fern there while you are away, and go to sleep. Give me that book and that shawl.'

He made a place for her between the spurs of a great oak-root, tearing the brambles away. She nestled into it, with a sigh of satisfaction. 'Divine! Take your food—I want nothing but the air and sleep. *Adieu, adieu!*'

He stood gazing down upon her, his face all tender lingering and remorse. How white she was, how fragile, how shaken by this storm of feeling he had forced upon her! How could he leave her?

But she waved him away impatiently, and he went at last, going first back to the village to fetch his purse which was not in his pocket.

As he came out of their little garden gate, turning again towards the forest which he must cross in order to get to Fontainebleau, he became aware of a group of men standing in front of the inn. Two of them were the landscape artists already slightly known to him, who saluted him as he came near. The other was a tall fine-looking man, with longish grizzled hair, a dark commanding eye, the rosette of the Legion of Honour at his buttonhole, and a general look of irritable power. He wore a wide straw hat and holland overcoat, and beside him on the bench lay some artist's paraphernalia.

All three eyed David as he passed, and he was no sooner a few yards away than they were looking after him and talking, the new-comer asking questions, the others replying.

'Oh, it is she!' said the stranger impatiently, throwing away his cigar. 'Auguste's description leaves me no doubt of it, and the woman at the house in the Rue Chantal where I had the caprice to inquire one day,

when she had been three weeks away, told me they were here. It is annoying. Something might have been made of her. Now it is finished. A handsome lad all the same!—of a rare type. *Non!—je me suis trompé—en devenant femme, elle n'a pas cessé d'être artiste!*'

The others laughed. Then they all took up their various equipments, and strolled off smoking to the forest. The man from Paris was engaged upon a large historical canvas representing an incident in the life of Diane de Poitiers. The incident had Diane's forest for a setting, but his trees did not satisfy him, he had come down to make a few fresh studies on the spot.

David walked his four miles to Fontainebleau, bought his cobalt, and set his face homewards about three o'clock. When he was halfway home, he turned aside into a tangle of young beechwood, parted the branches and found a shady corner where he could rest and think. The sun was very hot, the high road was scorched by it. But it was not heat or fatigue that had made him pause.

So far he had walked in a tumult of conflicting ideas, emotions, terrors, torn now by this memory, now by that—his mind traversed by one project after another. But now that he was so near to meeting her again, though he pined for her, he suddenly and pitifully felt the need for some greater firmness of mind and will. Let him pause and think! Where *was* he with her?—what were his real, tangible hopes and fears? Life and death depended for him on these days—these few vanishing days. And he was like one of the last year's leaves before him, whirled helpless and will-less in the dust-storm of the road!

He had sat there an unnoticed time when the sound of some heavy carriage approaching roused him. From his green covert he could see all that passed, and in-

instinctively he looked up. It was the Barbizon *diligence* going in to meet the five o'clock train at Fontainebleau, a train which in these lengthening days very often brought guests to the inn. The *correspondance* had been only begun during the last week, and to the dwellers at Barbizon the afternoon *diligence* had still the interest of novelty. With the perception of habit David noticed that there was no one outside; but though the rough blinds were most of them drawn down he thought he perceived some one inside—a lady. Strange that anyone should prefer the stifling *intérieur* who could mount beside the driver with a parasol!

The omnibus clattered past, and with the renewal of the woodland silence his mind plunged heavily once more into the agonised balancing of hope and fear. But in the end he sprang up with a renewed alertness of eye and step.

*Despair?* Impossible!—so long as one had one's love still in one's arms—could still plead one's cause, hand to hand, lip to lip. He strode homewards—running sometimes—the phrases of a new and richer eloquence crowding to his lips.

About a mile from Barbizon, the path to the Bas Bréau diverges to the right. He sped along it, leaping the brambles in his path. Soon he was on the edge of the great avenue itself, looking across it for that spot of colour among the green made by her light dress.

But there was no dress, and as he came up to the tree where he had left her, he saw to his stupefaction that there was no one there—nothing, no sign of her but the bracken and brambles he had beaten down for her some three hours before, and the trodden grass where her easel had been. Something showed on the ground. He stooped and noticed the empty cobalt-tube of the morning.

Of course she had grown tired of waiting and had gone home. But a great terror seized him. He turned and ran along the path they had traversed in the morning, making for the road; past the inn which seemed to have been struck to sleep by the sun, past Millet's studio on the left, to the little over-grown door in the brick wall.

No one in the garden, no one in the little *salon*, no one upstairs; Madame Pyat was away for the day, nursing a daughter-in-law. In all the house and garden there was not a sound or sign of life but the cat asleep on the stone step of the kitchen, and the bees humming in the acacias.

'Elise!' he called, inside and out, knowing already, poor fellow, in his wild despair that there could be no answer—that all was over.

But there was an answer. Elise was no untaught heroine. She played her part through. There was her letter, propped up against the gilt clock on the sham marble *cheminée*.

He found it and tore it open.

'You will curse me, but after a time you will forgive. I *could* not go on. Taranne found me in the forest, just half an hour after you left me. I looked up and saw him coming across the grass. He did not see me at first, he was looking about for a subject. I would have escaped, but there was no way. Then at last he saw me. He did not attack me, he did not persuade me, he only took for granted it was all over, —my Art! I must know best, of course; but he was sorry, for I had a gift. Had I seen the notice of my portrait in the "Temps," or the little mention in the "Figaro"? Oh, yes, Bréal had been very successful, and deserved to be. It was a brave soul, devoted to art, and art had rewarded her.

'Then I showed him my sketch, trembling—to stop

his talk—every word he said stabbed me. And he shrugged his shoulders quickly; then, as though recollecting himself, he put on a civil face all in a moment, and paid me compliments. To an amateur he is always civil. I was all white and shaking by this time. He turned to go away, and then I broke down. I burst into tears—I said I was coming back to the *atelier*—what did he mean by taking such a cruel, such an insolent tone with me? He would not be moved from his polite manner. He said he was glad to hear it; mademoiselle would be welcome; but just as though we were complete strangers. *He* who has befriended me, and taught me, and scolded me since I was fourteen! I could not bear it. I caught him by the arm. I told him he *should* tell me all he thought. Had I really talent?—a future?

‘Then he broke out in a torrent—he made me afraid of him—yet I adored him! He said I had more talent than any other pupil he had ever had; that I had been his hope and interest for six years; that he had taught me for nothing—befriended me—worked for me, behind the scenes, at the Salon; and all because he knew that I must rise, must win myself a name, that when I had got the necessary technique I should make one of the poetical impressionist painters, who are in the movement, who sway the public taste. But I must give *all* myself—my days and nights—my thoughts, and brain, and nerves. Other people might have adventures and paint the better. Not I,—I was too highly strung—for me it was ruin. “*C’est un maître sévère—l’Art,*” he said, looking like a god. “*Avec celui-là on ne transige pas. Ah! Dieu, je le connais, moi!*” I don’t know what he meant; but there has been a tragedy in his life; all the world knows that.

‘Then suddenly he took another tone, called me *pauvre enfant*, and apologised. Why should I be dis-

turbed? I had chosen for my own happiness, no doubt. What was fame or the high steep of art compared even with an *amour de jeunesse*? He had seen you, he said,—*une tête superbe—des épaules de lion!* I was a woman; a young handsome lover was worth more to me, naturally, than the drudgeries of art. A few years hence, when the pulse was calmer, it might have been all very well. Well! I must forgive him; he was my old friend. Then he wrung my hand, and left me.

‘Oh, David, David, I must go! I *must*. My life is imprisoned here with you—it beats its bars. Why did I ever let you persuade me—move me? And I should let you do it again. When you are there I am weak. I am no cruel adventuress, I can’t look at you and torture you. But what I feel for you is not love—no, no, it is not, poor boy! Who was it said “A love which can be tamed is no love”? But in three days—a week—mine had grown tame—it had no fears left. I am older than you, not in years, *mais dans l’âme*—there is what parts us.

‘Oh! I must go—and you must not try to find me. I shall be quite safe, but with people you know nothing about. I shall write to Madame Pyat for my things. You need have no trouble.

‘Very likely I shall pass you on the way, for if I hurry I can catch the *diligence*. But you will not see me. Oh, David, I put my arms round you! I press my face against you. I ask you to forgive me, to forget me, to work out your own life as I work out mine. It will soon be a dream—this little house—these summer days! I have kissed the chair you sat in last night, the book you read to me. *C’est déjà fini! Adieu! adieu!*’

He sat for long in a sort of stupor. Then that maddening thought seized him, stung him into life, that she had actually passed him, that he had seen her, not

knowing. That little indistinct figure in the *intérieur*, that was she.

He sprang up, in a blind anguish. Pursuit! the *diligence* was slow, the trains doubtful, he might overtake her yet. He dashed into the street, and into the Fontainebleau road. After he had run nearly a mile, he plunged into a path which he believed was a short cut. It led through a young and dense oak wood. He rushed on, seeing nothing, bruising himself and stumbling. At last a projecting branch struck him violently on the temple. He staggered, put up a feeble hand, sank on the grass against a trunk, and fainted.

## CHAPTER X

It was between five and six o'clock in the morning. In the Tuileries Gardens flowers, grass, and trees were drenched in dew, the great shadow of the Palace spread grey and cool over terraces and slopes, while beyond the young sun had already shaken off all cumbering mists and was pouring from a cloudless sky over the river with its barges and swimming-baths, over the bridges and the quays, and the vast courts and façades of the Louvre. Yet among the trees the air was still exquisitely fresh, the sun still a friend to be welcomed. The light morning wind swept the open, deserted spaces of the Gardens, playing merrily with the dust, the leaves, the fountains. Meanwhile on all sides the stir of the city was beginning, mounting slowly and steadily like a swelling tone.

On a bench under one of the trees in the Champs-Élysées sat a young man asleep. He had thrown himself against the back of the bench, his cheek resting on the iron, one hand on his knee. It was David



Grieve; the lad's look showed that his misery was still with him, even in sleep.

He was dreaming, letting fall here and there a troubled and disconnected word. In his dream he was far from Paris—walking after his sheep among the heathery slopes of the Scout, climbing towards the grey smithy among the old mill-stones, watching the Red Brook slide by over its long, shallow steps of orange grit, and the Downfall oozing and trickling among its tumbled blocks. Who was that hanging so high above the ravine on that treacherous stone that rocked with the least touch? Louie—mad girl!—come back. Ah! too late—the stone rocks, falls; he leaps from block to block, only to see the light dress disappear into the stony gulf below. He cries—struggles—wakes.

He sat up, wrestling with himself, trying to clear his torpid brain. Where was he? His dream-self was still roaming the Scout; his outer eye was bewildered by these alleys, these orange-trees, these statues—that distant arch.

Then the hideous, undefined cloud that was on him took shape. Elise had left him. And Louie, too, was gone—he knew not where, save that it was to ruin. When he had arrived the night before at the house in the Rue Chantal, Madame Merichat could tell him nothing of Mademoiselle Delaunay, who had not been heard of. Then he asked, his voice dying in his throat before the woman's hard and cynical stare—the stare of one who found the chief savour of life in the misfortunes of her kind—he asked for his sister and the Cervins. The Cervins were staying at Sèvres with relations, and were expected home again in a day or two; Mademoiselle Louie?—well, Mademoiselle Louie was not with them. Had she gone back to

England? *Mais non!* A trunk of hers was still in the Cervins' vestibule. Did Madame Merichat know anything about her? the lad asked, forcing himself to it, his blanched face turned away. Then the woman shrugged her shoulders and spoke out.

If he really must know, she thought there was no doubt at all that where Monsieur Montjoie was, Mademoiselle Louie was too. Monsieur Montjoie had paid the arrears of his rent to the *propriétaire*, somehow or other, and had then made a midnight flitting of it so as to escape other creditors who were tired of waiting for his statue to be finished. He had got a furniture van there at night, and he and the driver and her husband between them had packed most of the things from the studio, and M. Montjoie had gone off in the van about one o'clock in the morning. But of course she did not know his address! she said so half-a-dozen times a day to the persons who called, and it was as true as gospel. Why, indeed, should M. Montjoie let her or anyone else know, that he could help? He had gone into hiding to keep honest people out of their money—that was what it meant.

Well, and the same evening Mademoiselle Louie also disappeared. Madame Cervin had been in a great way, but she and mademoiselle had already quarrelled violently, and madame declared that she had no fault in the matter and that no one could be held responsible for the doings of such a minx. She believed that madame had written to monsieur. Monsieur had never received it? Ah, well, that was not surprising! No one could ever read madame's writing, though it made her temper very bad to tell her so.

Could he have Madame Cervin's address? Certainly. She wrote it out for him. As to his old room?—no, he could not go back to it.

Monsieur Dubois had lately come back, with some

money apparently, for he had paid his *loyer* just as the landlord was going to turn him out. But he was not at home.

Then she looked her questioner up and down, with a cool, inhuman curiosity working in her small eyes. So M'selle Elise had thrown him over already? That was sharp work! As for the rest of her news, her pessimism was interested in observing his demeanour under it. Certainly he did not seem to take it gaily; but what else did he expect with his sister—'*Je vous demande!*'

The young man dropped his head and went out, shrinking together into the darkness. She called her husband to the door, and the two peered after him into the lamp-lit street, dissecting him, his mistress, and his sister with knifelike tongues.

David went away and walked up and down the streets, the quays, the bridges, hour after hour, feeling no fatigue, till suddenly, just as the dawn was coming on, he sank heavily on to the seat in the Champs-Élysées. The slip with Madame Cervin's address on it dropped unheeded from his relaxing hand. His nervous strength was gone, and he had to sit and bear his anguish without the relief of frenzied motion.

Now, after his hour's sleep, he was somewhat revived, ready to start again—to search again; but where? whither? *Somewhere* in this vast, sun-wrapped Paris was Elise, waking, perhaps, at this moment and thinking of him with a smile and a tear. He *would* find her, come what would; he could not live without her!

Then into his wild passion of loss and desire there slipped again that cold, creeping thought of Louie—ruined, body and soul—ruined in this base and dangerous Paris, while he still carried in his breast that little scrap of scrawled paper! And why? Because he

had flung her to the wolves without a thought, that he and Elise might travel to their goal unchecked. '*My God!*'

The sense of some one near him made him look up. He saw a girl stopping near the seat whom in his frenzy he for an instant took for Louie. There was the same bold, defiant carriage, the same black hair and eyes. He half rose, with a cry.

The girl gave a quick, coarse laugh. She had been hurrying across the Avenue towards the nearest bridge when she saw him; now she came up to him with a hideous jest. David saw her face full, caught the ghastly suggestions of it—its vice, its look of mortal illness wrecking and blurring the cheap prettiness it had once possessed, and beneath all else the fierceness of the hunted creature. His whole being rose in repulsion; he waved her away, and she went, still laughing. But his guilty mind went with her, making of her infamy the prophecy and foretaste of another's.

He hurried on again, and again had to rest for faintness' sake, while the furies returned upon him. It seemed as though every passer-by were there only to scourge and torture him; or, rather, out of the moving spectacle of human life which began to flow past him with constant increasing fulness, that strange selective poet-sense of his chose out the figures and incidents which bore upon his own story and worked into his own drama, passing by the rest. A group of persons presently attracted him who had just come apparently from the Rive Gauche, and were making for the Rue Royale. They consisted of a man, a woman, and a child. The child was a tiny creature in a preposterous feathered hat as large as itself. It had just been put down to walk by its father, and was dragging contentedly at its mother's hand, sucking a crust. The man had a bag of tools on his shoulder

and was clearly an artisan going to work. His wife's face was turned to him and they were talking fast, lingering a little in the sunshine like people who had a few minutes to spare and were enjoying them. The man had the blanched, unwholesome look of the city workman who lives a sedentary life in foul air, and was, moreover, undersized and nowadays attractive, save perhaps for the keen amused eyes with which he was listening to his wife's chatter.

The great bell of Notre-Dame chimed in the distance. The man straightened himself at once, adjusted his bag of tools, and hurried off, nodding to his wife.

She looked after him a minute, then turned and came slowly along the alley towards the bench where David sat, idly watching her. The heat was growing steadily, the child was heavy on her hand, and she was again clearly on the way to motherhood. The seat invited her, and she came up to it.

She sat down, panting, and eyed her neighbour askance, detecting at once how handsome he was, and how unshorn and haggard. Before he knew where he was, or how it had begun, they were talking. She had no shyness of any sort, and, as it seemed to him, a motherly, half-contemptuous indulgence for his sex, as such, which fitted oddly with her young looks. Very soon she was asking him the most direct questions, which he had to parry as best he could. She made out at once that he was a foreigner and in the book trade, and then she let him know by a passing expression or two that naturally she understood why he was lounging there in that plight at that hour in the morning. He had been keeping gay company, of course, and had but just emerged from some nocturnal orgie or other. And then she shrugged her strong shoulders with a light, pitiful air, as though marvelling once more for the thousandth time over the stu-

pidity of men who would commit these idiocies, would waste their money and health in them, say what women would.

Presently he discovered that she was giving him advice of different kinds, counselling him above all to find a good wife who would work and save his wages for him. A decent marriage was in truth an economy, though young men would never believe it.

David could only stare at her in return for her counsels. The difference between his place at that moment in the human comedy and hers was too great to be explained; it called only for silence or a stammering commonplace or two. Yet for a few moments the neighbourhood of her and her child was pleasant to him. She had a good comely head, which was bare under the sun, a little shawl crossed upon her ample bust, and a market-basket on her arm. The child was playing in the fine gravel at her feet, pausing every now and then to study her mother's eye with a furtive gravity, while the hat fell back and made a still more fantastic combination than before with the pensive little face.

Presently, tired of her play, she came to stand by her mother's knee, laying her head against it.

'*Mon petit ange ! que tu es gentille !*' said the mother in a low, rapid voice, pressing her hand on the child's cheek. Then, turning back to David, she chattered on about the profit and loss of married life. All that she said was steeped in prose—in the prose especially of sous and francs; she talked of rents, of the price of food, of the state of wages in her husband's trade. Yet every here and there came an exquisite word, a flash. It seemed that she had been very ill with her first child. She did not mince matters much even with this young man, and David gathered that she

had not only been near dying, but that her illness had made a moral epoch in her life. She was laid by for three months; work was slack for her husband; her own earnings, for she was a skilled embroideress working for a great linen-shop in the Rue Vienne, were no longer forthcoming. Would her husband put up with it, with the worries of the baby, and the *ménage*, and the sick wife, and that sharp pinch of want into the bargain, from which during two years she had completely protected him?

‘I cried one day,’ she said simply; ‘I said to him, “You’re just sick of it, ain’t you? Well, I’m going to die. Go and shift for yourself, and take the baby to the *Enfants Trouvés*. *Alors*——”’

She paused, her homely face gently lit up from within. ‘He is not a man of words—Jules. He told me to be quiet, called me *petite sottie*. “Haven’t you slaved for two years?” he said. “Well, then, lie still, can’t you?—*faut b’en que chacun prenne son tour*!”’

She broke off, smiling and shaking her head. Then glancing round upon her companion again, she resumed her motherly sermon. That was the good of being married; that there was some one to share the bad times with, as well as the good.

‘But perhaps,’ she inquired briskly, ‘you don’t believe in being married? You are for *l’union libre*?’

She spoke like one touching on a long familiar question—as much a question indeed of daily life and of her class as those other matters of wages and food she had been discussing.

A slow and painful red mounted into the Englishman’s cheek.

‘I don’t know,’ he said stupidly. ‘And you?’

‘No, no!’ she said emphatically, twice, nodding her head. ‘Oh, I was brought up that way. My father

was a Red—an Anarchist—a great man among them; he died last year. He said that liberty was everything. It made him mad when any of his friends accepted *l'union légale*—for him it was a treason. He never married my mother, though he was faithful to her all his life. But for me——’ she paused, shaking her head slowly. ‘Well, I had an elder sister—that says everything. *Faut pas en parler*; it makes me melancholy, and one must keep up one’s spirits when one is like this. It is three years since she died; she was my father’s favourite. When they buried her—she died in the hospital—I sat down and thought a little. It was abominable what she had suffered, and I said to myself, “Why?”’

The child swayed backward against her knee, so absorbed was it in its thumb and the sky, and would have fallen but that she caught it with her housewife’s hand, being throughout mindful of its slightest movement.

‘“Why?” I said. She was a good creature—a bit foolish perhaps, but she would have worked the shoes off her feet to please anybody. And they had treated her—but like a dog! It bursts one’s heart to think of it, and I said to myself,—*le mariage c’est la justice*! it is nothing but that. It is not what the priests say—oh! not at all. But it strikes me like that—*c’est la justice*; it is nothing but that!’

And she looked at him with the bright fixed eyes of one whose thoughts are beyond their own expressing. He interrupted her, wondering at the harsh rapidity of his own voice. ‘But if it is the woman who will be free?—who will have no bond?’

Her expression changed, became shrewd, inquisitive, personal.

‘Well, then!’ she said with a shrug, and paused. ‘It is because one is ignorant, you see, or one is bad



—on peut toujours être une coquine! And one forgets—one thinks one can be always young, and love is all pleasure—and it is not true! one gets old—and there is the child—and one may die of it.’

She spoke with the utmost simplicity, yet with a certain intensity. Evidently she had a natural pride in her philosophy of life, as though in a possession of one’s own earning and elaborating. She had probably expressed it often before in much the same terms, and with the same verbal hitches and gaps.

The young fellow beside her rose hastily, and bade her good morning. She looked mildly surprised at such an abrupt departure, but she was not offended.

‘Good day, citizen,’ she said, nodding to him. ‘I disturb you?’

He muttered something and strode away.

How much time had that wasted of this irrecoverable day that was to set him on Elise’s track once more! The first post had been delivered by this time. Elise must either return to her studio or remove her possessions; anyhow, sooner or later the Merichats must have information. And if they were forbidden to speak, well, then they must be bribed.

That made him think of money, and in a sudden panic he turned aside into a small street and examined his pockets. Nearly four napoleons left, after allowing for his debt to Madame Pyat, which must be paid that day. Even in his sick, stunned state of the evening before, when he was at last staggering on again, after his fall, to the Fontainebleau station, he had remembered to stop a Barbizon man whom he came across and give him a pencilled message for the deserted madame. He had sent her the Rue Chantal address, there would be a letter from her this morn-

ing. And he must put her on the watch too—Elise could not escape him long.

But he must have more money. He looked out for a stationer's shop, went in and wrote a letter to John, which he posted at the next post-office.

It was an incoherent scrawl, telling the lad to change the cheque he enclosed in Bank of England notes and send them to the Rue Chantal, care of Madame Merichat. He was not to expect him back just yet, and was to say to any friend who might inquire that he was still detained.

That letter, with the momentary contact it involved with his Manchester life, brought down upon him again the thought of Louie. But this time he flung it from him with a fierce impatience. His brain, indeed, was incapable of dealing with it. Remorse? rescue? there would be time enough for that by-and-by. Meanwhile—to find Elise!

And for a week he spent the energies of every thought and every moment on this mad pursuit. Of these days of nightmare he could afterwards remember but a few detached incidents here and there.

He recollected patrols up and down the Rue Chantal; talks with Madame Merichat; the gleam in her eyes as he slipped his profitless bribes into her hand; visits to Taranne's *atelier*, where the *concierge* at last grew suspicious and reported the matter within; and finally an interview with the artist himself, from which the English youth emerged no nearer to his end than before, and crushed under the humiliation of the great man's advice. He could vaguely recall the long pacings of the Louvre; the fixed scrutiny of face after face; vain chases; ignominious retreats; and all the wretched stages of that slow descent into a bottomless despair!

At last there was a letter—the long-expected letter to Madame Merichat, directing the removal of Mademoiselle Delaunay's possessions from the Rue Chantal. It was written by a certain M. Pimodan, who did not give his address, but who declared himself authorised by Mademoiselle Delaunay to remove her effects, and named a day when he would himself superintend the process and produce his credentials. David passed the time after the arrival of this letter in a state of excitement which left him hardly master of his actions. He had a room at the top of a wretched little hotel close to the Nord station, but he hardly ate or slept. The noises of Paris were agony to him night and day; he lived in a perpetual nausea of mind and body, hardly able at times to distinguish between the images of the brain and the impressions coming from without.

Before the day came, a note was brought to him from the Rue Chantal. It was from M. Pimodan, and requested an interview.

‘I should be glad to see you on Mademoiselle Delaunay's behalf. Will you meet me in the Garden of the Luxembourg in front of the central pavilion, at three o'clock to-morrow?—GUSTAVE PIMODAN.’

Before the hour came David was already pacing up and down the blazing gravel in front of the Palace. When M. Pimodan came the Englishman in an instant recognised the cousin—the lanky fellow with the spectacles, who had injured his eyes by reading.

As soon as he had established this identification—and the two men had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen sentences before the flashing inward argument was complete—a feeling of enmity arose in his mind, so intense that he could hardly keep himself still, could hardly bring his attention to bear on what he or his

companion was saying. He had been brought so low that, with anyone else, he must have broken into appeals and entreaties. With this man—No!

As for M. Pimodan, the first sight of the young Englishman had apparently wrought in him also some degree of nervous shock; for the hand which held his cane fidgeted as he walked. He had the air of a person, too, who had lately gone through mental struggle; the red rims of the eyes under their large spectacles might be due either to chronic weakness or to recent sleeplessness.

But however these things might be, he took a perfectly mild tone in which David's sick and irritable sense instantly detected the note of various offensive superiorities—the superiority of class and the superiority of age to begin with. He said in the first place that he was Mademoiselle Delaunay's relative, and that she had commissioned him to act for her in this very delicate manner. She was well aware—had been aware from the first day—that she was watched, and that M. Grieve was moving heaven and earth to discover her whereabouts. She did not, however, intend to be discovered; let him take that for granted. In her view all was over—their relation was irrevocably at an end. She wished now to devote herself wholly and entirely to her art, without disturbance or distraction from any other quarter whatever. Might he, under these circumstances, give M. Grieve the advice of a man of the world, and counsel him to regard the matter in the same light?

David walked blindly on, playing with his watch-chain. In the name of God whom and what was this fellow talking about? At the end of ten minutes' discourse on M. Pimodan's part, and of a few rare monosyllables on his own, he said, straightening his young figure with a nervous tremor:

'What you say is perfectly useless—I shall find her.'

Then a sudden angry light leapt into the cousin's eyes.

'You will *not* find her!' he said, drawing a sharp breath. 'It shows how little you know her, after all—compared with those who——No matter! Oh, you can persecute and annoy her! No one doubts that. You can stand between her and all that she now cares to live for—her art. But you can do nothing else; and you will not be allowed to do that long, for she is not alone, as you seem to think. She will be protected. There are resources, and we shall employ them!'

The cousin had gone beyond his commission. David guessed as much. He did not believe that Elise had set this man on to threaten him. What a fool! But he merely said with a sarcastic dryness, endeavouring the while to steady his parched lips and his eyelids swollen with weariness:

'*A la bonne heure!*—employ them. Well, sir, you know, I believe, where Mademoiselle Delaunay is. I wish to know. You will not inform me. I therefore pursue my own way, and it is useless for me to detain you any longer.'

'Know where she is!' cried the other, a triumphant flash passing across his sallow student's face; 'I have but just parted from her.'

But he stopped. As a physician, he was accustomed to notice the changes of physiognomy. Instinctively he put some feet of distance between himself and his companion. Was it agony or rage he saw?

But David recovered himself by a strong effort.

'Go and tell her, then, that I shall find her,' he said with a shaking voice. 'I have many things to say to her yet.'

'Absurd!' cried the other angrily. 'Very well, sir, we know what to expect. It only remains for us to take measures accordingly.'

And drawing himself up he walked quickly away, looking back every now and then to see whether he were followed or no.

'Supposing I did track him,' thought David vaguely, 'what would he do? Summon one of the various *gardiens* in sight?'

He had, however, no such intention. What could it have ended in but a street scuffle? Patience! and he would find Elise for himself in spite of that prater.

Meanwhile he descended the terrace, and threw himself, worn out, upon the first seat, to collect his thoughts again.

Oh, this summer beauty:—this festal moment of the great city! Palace and Garden lay under the full June sun. The clipped trees on the terraces, statues, alleys, and groves slept in the luminous dancing air. All the normal stir and movement of the Garden seemed to have passed to-day into the leaping and intermingling curves of the fountains; the few figures passing and repassing hardly disturbed the general impression of heat and solitude.

For hours David sat there, head down, his eyes on the gravel, his hands tightly clasped between his knees. When he rose at last it was to hurry down the Rue de Seine and take the nearest bridge and street northwards to the Quartier Montmartre. He had been dreaming too long! and yet so great by now was his confusion of mind that he was no nearer a fresh plan of operations than when the cousin left him.

When he arrived at Madame Merichat's *loge* it was to find that no new development had occurred. Elise's possessions were still untouched; neither she nor M.

Pimodan had given any further sign. The *concierge*, however, gave him a letter which had just arrived for him. Seeing that it bore the Manchester postmark, he thrust it into his pocket unread.

When he entered the evil-smelling passage of his hotel, a *garçon* emerged from the restaurant, dived into the *salle de lecture*, and came out with an envelope, which he gave to the Englishman. It had been left by a messenger five minutes before monsieur arrived. David took it, a singing in his ears; mounted to the first landing, where the gas burnt at midday, and read it.

'Gustave tells me you would not listen to him. Do you want to make me curse our meeting? Be a man and leave me to myself! While I know that you are on the watch I shall keep away from Paris—*voilà tout*. I shall eat my heart out,—I shall begin to hate you,—you will have chosen it so. Only understand this: I will *never* see you again, for both our sakes, if I can help it. Believe what I say—believe that what parts us is a fate stronger than either of us, and go! Oh! you men talk of love—and at bottom you are all selfish and cruel. Do you want to break me more than I am already broken? Set me free!—will you kill both my youth and my art together?'

He carefully refolded the letter and put it into its envelope. Then he turned and went downstairs again towards the street. But the same frowsy waiter who had given him his letter was on the watch for him. In the morning monsieur had commanded some dinner. Would he take it now?

The man's tone was sulky. David understood that he was not considered a profitable customer of the hotel—that, considering his queer ways, late hours, and small spendings, they would probably be glad to be rid of him. With a curious submission and shrink-

ing he followed the man into the stifling restaurant and sat down at one of the tables.

Here some food was brought to him, which he tried to eat. But in the midst of it he was seized with so great a loathing, that he suddenly rose, so violently as to upset a plate of bread beside him, and make a waiter spring forward to save the table itself. He pushed his way to the glass-door into the street, totally unconscious of the stir his behaviour was causing among the stout women in bonnets and the red-faced men with napkins tucked under their chins who were dining near, fumbled at the handle, and tottered out.

'*Quel animal !*' said the enraged *dame du comptoir*, who had noticed the incident. 'Marie!'—this to the sickly girl who sat near with the books in front of her, 'enter that plate, and charge it high. To-morrow I shall raise the price of his room. One must really finish with him. *C'est un fou !*'

Meanwhile David, revived somewhat by the air, was already in the Boulevard, making for the Opéra and the Rue Royale. It was not yet seven, the Salon would be still open. The distances seemed to him interminable—the length of the Rue Royale, the expanse of the Place de la Concorde, the gay and crowded ways of the Champs-Élysées. But at last he was mounting the stairs and battling through the rooms at the top. He looked first at the larger picture which had gained her the *mention honorable*. It was a study of factory girls at their work, unequal, impatient, but full of a warm inventive talent—full of *her*. He knew its history—the small difficulties and triumphs of it, the adventures she had gone through on behalf of it—by heart. That fair-haired girl in the corner was studied from herself; the tint of the hair, the curve of the cheek were exact. He strained his eyes to look, searching for this detail and



that. His heart said farewell—that was the last, the nearest he should ever come to her on this earth! Next year? Ah, he would give much to see her pictures of next year, with these new perceptions she had created in him.

He stood a minute before the other picture, the portrait—a study from one of her comrades in the *atelier*—and then he wound his way again through the thronged and suffocating rooms, and out into the evening.

The excessive heat of the last few days was about to end in storm. A wide tempestuous heaven lay beyond the Arc de Triomphe; the red light struck down the great avenue and into the faces of those stepping westwards. The deep shade under the full-leaved trees—how thinly green they were still against the sky that day when she vanished from him beside the arch and their love began!—was full of loungers and of playing children; the carriages passed and repassed in the light. So it had been, the enchanting never-ending drama, before this spectator entered—so it would be when he had departed.

He turned southwards and found himself presently on the Quai de la Conférence, hanging over the river in a quiet spot where few people passed.

His frenzy of will was gone, and his last hope with it. Elise had conquered. Her letter had brought him face to face with those realities which, during this week of madness, he had simply refused to see. He could pit himself against her no longer. When it came to the point he had not the nerve to enter upon a degrading and ignoble conflict, in which all that was to be won was her hatred or her fear. That, indeed, would be the last and worst ruin, for it would be the ruin, not of happiness or of hope, but of love itself, and memory.

He took out her letter and re-read it. Then he searched for some of the writing materials he had bought when he had written his last letter to Manchester, and, spreading a sheet on the parapet of the river wall, he wrote:

‘Be content. I think now—I am sure—that we shall never meet again. From this moment you will be troubled with me no more. Only I tell you for the last time that you have done ill—irrevocably ill. For what you have slain in yourself and me is not love or happiness, but *life* itself—the life of life!’

Foolish, incoherent words, as they seemed to him, but he could find no better. Confusedly and darkly they expressed the cry, the inmost conviction of his being. He could come no nearer at any rate to that desolation at the heart of him.

But now what next? Manchester?—the resumption and expansion of his bookseller’s life—the renewal of his old friendships—the pursuit of money and of knowledge?

No. That is all done. The paralysis of will is complete. He cannot drive himself home, back to the old paths. The disgust with life has sunk too deep—the physical and moral collapse of which he is conscious has gone too far.

*‘Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’*

There, deep in the fibre of memory lie these words, and others like them—the typical words of a religion which is still in some sense the ineradicable warp of his nature, as it had been for generations of his forefathers. His individual resources of speech, as it were, have been overpassed; he falls back upon the inherited, the traditional resources of his race.

He looked up. A last gleam was on the Invalides—on the topmost roof of the Corps Législatif; other-

wise the opposite bank was already grey, the river lay in shade. But the upper air was still aglow with the wide flame and splendour of the sunset; and beneath, on the bridges and the water and the buildings, how clear and gracious was the twilight!

*'Who shall deliver me?'* *'Deliver thyself!'* One instant, and the intolerable pressure on this shrinking point of consciousness can be lightened, this hunger for sleep appeased! Nothing else is possible—no future is even conceivable. His life in flowering has exhausted and undone itself, so spendthrift has been the process.

So he took his resolve. Then, already calmed, he hung over the river, thinking, reviewing the past.

Six weeks—six weeks only!—yet nothing in his life before matters or counts by comparison. For this mood of deadly fatigue the remembrance of all the intellectual joys and conquests of the last few years has no savour whatever. Strange that the development of one relation of life—the relation of passion—should have been able so to absorb and squander the power of living! His fighting, enduring capacity, compared with that of other men, must be small indeed. He thinks of himself as a coward and a weakling. But neither the facts of the present nor the face of the future are altered thereby.

*The relation of sex*—in its different phases—as he sees the world at this moment, there is no other reality. The vile and hideous phase of it has been present to him from the first moment of his arrival in these Paris streets. He thinks of the pictures and songs at the 'Trois Rats' from which in the first delicacy and flush of passion he had shrunk with so deep a loathing; of the photographs and engravings in the shops and the books on the stalls; of some of those pictures he had passed, a few minutes before, in the

Salon; of that girl's face in the Tuileries Gardens. The animal, the beast in human nature, never has it been so present to him before; for he has understood and realised it while loathing it, has been admitted by his own passion to those regions of human feeling where all that is most foul and all that is most beautiful are generated alike from the elemental forces of life. And because he had loved Elise so finely and yet so humanly, with a boy's freshness and a man's energy, this animalism of the great city had been to him a perpetual nightmare and horror. His whole heart had gone into Regnault's cry—into Regnault's protest. For his own enchanted island had seemed to him often in the days of his wooing to be but floating on the surface of a ghastly sea, whence emerged all conceivable shapes of ruin, mockery, terror, and disease. It was because of the tremulous adoration which filled him from the beginning that the vice of Paris had struck him in this tragical way. At another time it might have been indifferent to him, might even have engulfed him.

But he!—he had known the best of passion! He laid his head down on the wall, and lived Barbizon over again—day after day, night after night. Now for the first time there is a pause in the urging madness of his despair. All the pulses of his being slacken; he draws back as it were from his own fate, surveys it as a whole, separates himself from it. The various scenes of it succeed each other in memory, set always—incomparably set—in the spring green of the forest, or under a charmed moonlight, or amid the flowery detail of a closed garden. Her little figure flashes before him—he sees her gesture, her smile; he hears his own voice and hers; recalls the struggle to express, the poverty of words, the thrill of silence, and that perpetual and exquisite recurrence to the interpreting

images of poetry and art. But no poet had imagined better, had divined more than they in those earliest hours had *lived*! So he had told her, so he insisted now with a desperate faith.

But, poor soul! even as he insists, the agony within rises, breaks up, overwhelms the picture. He lives again through the jars and frets of those few burning days, the growing mistrust of them, the sense of jealous terror and insecurity—and then through the anguish of desertion and loss. He writhes again under the wrenching apart of their half-fused lives—under this intolerable ache of his own wound.

*This* the best of passion! Why his whole soul is still athirst and ahungered. Not a single craving of it has been satisfied. What is killing him is the sense of a thwarted gift, a baffled faculty—the faculty of self-spending, self-surrender. This, the best?

Then the mind fell into a whirlwind of half-articulate debate, from the darkness of which emerged two scenes—fragments—set clear in a passing light of memory.

That workman and his wife standing together before the day's toil—the woman's contented smile as her look clung to the mean departing figure.

And far, far back in his boyish life—Margaret sitting beside 'Lias in the damp autumn dawn, spending on his dying weakness that exquisite, ineffable passion of tenderness, of pity.

Ah! from the very beginning he had been in love with loving. He drew the labouring breath of one who has staked his all for some long-coveted gain, and lost.

Well!—Mr. Ancrum may be right—the English Puritan may be right—'sin' and 'law' may have after all some of those mysterious meanings his young analysis had impetuously denied them—he and Elise

may have been only dashing themselves against the hard facts of the world's order, while they seemed to be transcending the common lot and spurning the common ways. What matter now! A certain impatient defiance rises in his stricken soul. He has made shipwreck of this one poor opportunity of life—confessed! now let the God behind it punish, if God there be. '*The rest is silence.*' With Elise in his arms, he had grasped at immortality. Now a stubborn, everlasting 'Nay' possesses him. There is nothing beyond.

He gathered up his letter, folded it, and put it into the breast-pocket of his coat. But in doing so his fingers touched once more the ragged edges of a bit of frayed paper.

*Louie!*

Through all these half-sane days and nights he had never once thought of his sister. She had passed out of his life—she had played no part even in the nightmares of his dreams.

But now!—while that intense denial of any reality in the universe beyond and behind this masque of life and things was still vibrating through his deepest being, it was as though a hand gently drew aside a curtain, and there grew clear before him, slowly effacing from his eyes the whole grandiose spectacle of buildings, sky, and river, that scene of the past which had worked so potently both in his childish sense and in Reuben's maturer conscience—the bare room, the iron bed, the dying man, one child within his arm, the other a frightened baby beside him.

It was frightfully clear, clearer than it had ever been in any normal state of brain, and as his mind lingered on it, unconsciously shaping, deepening its own creation, the weird impression grew that the helpless figure amid the bedclothes rose on its elbow,

opened its cavernous eyes, and looked at him face to face, at the son whose childish heart had beat against his father's to the last. The boy's tortured soul quailed afresh before the curse his own remorse called into those eyes.

He hung over the water pleading with the phantom—defending himself. Every now and then he found that he was speaking aloud; then he would look round with a quick, piteous terror to see whether he had been heard or no, the parched lips beginning to move again almost before his fear was soothed.

All his past returned upon him, with its obligations, its fetters of conscience and kinship, so slowly forged, so often resisted and forgotten, and yet so strong. The moment marked the first passing away of the philtre, but it brought no recovery with it.

*'My God! my God! I tried, father—I tried. But she is lost, lost—as I am!'*

Then a thought found entrance and developed. He walked up and down the quay, wrestling it out, returning slowly and with enormous difficulty, because of his physical state, to some of the normal estimates and relations of life.

At last he dragged himself off towards his hotel. He must have some sleep, or how could these hours that yet remained be lived through—his scheme carried out?

On the way he went into a shop still open on the boulevard. When he came out he thrust his purchase into his pocket, buttoned his coat over it, and pursued his way northwards with a brisker step.

## CHAPTER XI

Two days afterwards David stood at the door of a house in the outskirts of the Auteuil district of Paris. The street had a half-finished, miscellaneous air; new buildings of the villa type were mixed up with old and dingy houses standing in gardens, which had been evidently overtaken by the advancing stream of Paris, having once enjoyed a considerable amount of country air and space.

It was at the garden gate of one of these older houses that David rang, looking about him the while at the mean irregular street and the ill-kept side-walks with their heaps of cinders and refuse.

A powerfully built woman appeared, scowling, in answer to the bell. At first she flatly refused the new-comer admission. But David was prepared. He set to work to convince her that he was not a Paris creditor, and, further, that he was well aware M. Montjoie was not at home, since he had passed him on the other side of the road, apparently hurrying to the railway station, only a few minutes before. He desired simply to see madame. At this the woman's expression changed somewhat. She showed, however, no immediate signs of letting him in, being clearly chosen and paid to be a watch-dog. Then David brusquely put his hand in his pocket. Somehow he must get this harridan out of the way at once! The same terror was upon him that had been upon him now for many days and nights—of losing command of himself, of being no more able to do what he had to do.

The creature studied him, put out a greedy palm, developed a smile still more repellant than her brutality, and let him in.



He found himself in a small, neglected garden; in front of him, to the right, a wretched, weather-stained house, bearing every mark of poverty and dilapidation, while to the left there stretched out from the house a long glass structure, also in miserable condition—a sculptor's studio, as he guessed.

His guide led him to the studio-door. Madame was there a few minutes ago. As they approached, David stopped.

'I will knock. You may go back to the house. I am madame's brother.'

She looked at him once more, reluctant. Then, in the clearer light of the garden, the likeness of the face to one she already knew struck her with amazement; she turned and went off, muttering.

David knocked at the door; there was a movement within, and it was cautiously opened.

'*Monsieur est sorti.*—You!'

The brother and sister were face to face.

David closed the door behind him, and Louie retreated slowly, her hands behind her, her tall figure drawing itself up, her face setting into a frowning scorn.

'*You!*—what are you here for? We have done with each other!'

For answer David went up to a stove which was feebly burning in the damp, cheerless place, put down his hat and stick, and bent over it, stretching out his hands to the warmth. A chair was beside it, and on the chair some scattered bits of silk and velvet, out of which Louie was apparently fashioning a hat.

She stood still, observing him. She was in a loose dress of some silky Oriental material, and on her black hair she wore a red close-fitting cap with a fringe of golden coins dropping lightly and richly round her superb head and face.

'What is the matter with you?' she asked him grimly, after a minute's silence. 'She has left you—that's plain!'

The young man involuntarily threw back his head as though he had been struck, and a vivid colour rushed into his cheek. But he answered quickly:

'We need not discuss my affairs. I did not come here to speak of them. They are beyond mending. I came to see—before I go—whether there is anything I can do to help you.'

'Much obliged to you!' she cried, flinging herself down on the edge of a rough board platform, whereon stood a fresh and vigorous clay-study, for which she had just been posing, to judge from her dress. Beyond was the Mænad. And in the distance loomed a great block of marble, upon which masons had been working that afternoon.

'I am *greatly* obliged to you!' she repeated mockingly, taking the crouching attitude of an animal ready to attack. 'You are a pattern brother.'

Her glowing looks expressed the enmity and contempt she was at the moment too excited to put into words.

David drew his hand across his eyes with a long breath. How was he to get through it, this task of his, with this swollen, aching brain and these trembling limbs? Louie *must* let him speak; he bitterly felt his physical impotence to wrestle with her.

He went up to her slowly and sat down beside her. She drew away from him with a violent movement. But he laid his hand upon her knee—a shaking hand which his impatient will tried in vain to steady.

'Louie, look at me!' he commanded.

She did so unwillingly, but the proud repulsion of her lip did not relax.

'Well, I dare say you look pretty bad. Whose

fault is it? everybody else but you knew what the creature was worth. Ask anybody!’

The lad’s frame straightened and steadied. He took his hand from her knee.

‘Say that kind of thing again,’ he said calmly, ‘and I walk straight out of that door, and you set eyes on me for the last time. That would be what you want, I dare say. All I wish to point out is, that you would be a great fool. I have not come here to-day to waste words, but to propose something to your advantage—your money-advantage,’ he repeated deliberately, looking round the dismal building with its ill-mended gaps and rents, and its complete lack of the properties and appliances to which the humblest modern artist pretends. ‘To judge from what I heard in Paris, and what I see, money is scarce here.’

His piteous sudden wish to soften her, to win a kind word from her, from anyone, had passed away. He was beginning to take command of her as in the old days.

‘Well, maybe we are hard up,’ she admitted slowly. ‘People are such brutes and won’t wait, and a sculptor has to pay out for a lot of things before he can make anything at all. But that statue will put it all right,’ and she pointed behind her to the Mænad. ‘It’s me—it’s the one you tried to put a stopper on.’

She looked at him darkly defiant. She was leaning back on one arm, her foot beating with the trick familiar to her. For reckless and evil splendour the figure was unsurpassable.

‘When he sells that,’ she went on, seeing that he did not answer, ‘and he will sell it in a jiffy—it is the best he’s ever done—there’ll be heaps of money.’

David smiled.

‘For a week perhaps. Then, if I understand this business aright—I have been doing my best, you per-

ceive, to get information, and M. Montjoie seems to be better known than one supposed to half Paris—the game will begin again.’

‘Never you mind,’ she broke in, breathing quickly. ‘Give me my money—the money that belongs to me—and let me alone.’

‘On one condition,’ he said quietly. ‘That money, as you remember, is in my hands and at my disposal.’

‘Ah! I supposed you would try to grab it!’ she cried.

Even he was astonished at her violence—her insolence. The demon in her had never been so plain, the woman never so effaced. His heart dropped within him like lead, and his whole being shrank from her.

‘Listen to me!’ he said, seizing her strongly by the hand, while a light of wrath leapt into his changed and bloodshot eyes. ‘This man will desert you; in a year’s time he will have tired of you; what’ll you do then?’

‘Manage for myself, thank you! without any canting interference from you. I have had enough of that.’

‘And fall again,’ he said, releasing her, and speaking with a deliberate intensity; ‘fall again—from infamy to infamy!’

She sprang up.

‘Mind yourself!’ she cried.

Miserable moment! As he looked at her he felt that that weapon of his old influence with her which, poor as it was, he had relied on in the last resort all his life, had broken in his hand. His own act had robbed it of all virtue. That pang of ‘irreparable-ness’ which had smitten Elise smote him now. All was undone—all was done!

He buried his face in his hands an instant. When he lifted it again, she was standing with her arms

folded across her chest, leaning against an iron shaft which supported part of the roof.

'You had better go!' she said, still in a white heat. 'Why you ever came I don't know. If you won't give me that money, I shall get it somehow.'

Suddenly, as she spoke, everything—the situation, the subject of their talk, the past—seemed to be wiped out of David's brain. He stared round him helplessly. Why were they there—what had happened?

This blankness lasted a certain number of seconds. Then it passed away, and he painfully recovered his identity. But the experience was not new to him—it would recur—let him be quick.

This time a happier instinct served him. He, too, rose and went up to her.

'We are a pair of fools,' he said to her, half bitterly, half gently; 'we reproach and revile each other, and all the time I am come to give you not only what is yours, but all—all I have—that it may stand between you and—and worse ruin.'

'Ruin!' she said, throwing back her head and catching at the word; 'speak for yourself! If I am Montjoie's mistress, Elise Delaunay was yours. Don't preach. It won't go down.'

'I have no intention of preaching—don't alarm yourself,' he replied quietly, this time controlling himself without difficulty. 'I have only this to say. On the day when you become Montjoie's *wife*, all our father's money—all the six hundred pounds Mr. Gurney paid over to me in January, shall be paid to you.'

She started, caught her breath, tried to brazen it out.

'What is this idiocy for?' she asked coldly. 'What does marrying matter to you?'

He sank down again on the chair by the stove, being, indeed, unable to stand.

'Perhaps I can't tell you,' he said, after a pause, shading his face from her with his hand; 'perhaps I could not make plain to myself what I feel. But this I know—that this man with whom you are living here is a man for whom nobody has a good word. I want to give you a hold over him. But first!—stop a moment,'—he dropped his hand and looked up eagerly, 'will you leave him—leave him at once? I could arrange that.'

'Make your mind easy,' she said shortly; 'he suits me—I stay. I went with him, well, because I was dull—and because I wanted to make you smart for it, if you're keen to know!—but if you think I am anxious to go home, to be cried over by Dora and lectured by you, you're vastly mistaken. I can manage him! I have my hold on him—he knows very well what I am worth to him.'

She threw her head back superbly against the iron shaft, putting one arm round it and resting her hot cheek against it as though for coolness.

'Why should we argue?' he said sharply—after a wretched silence. 'I didn't come for that. If you won't leave him I have only this to say. On the day he marries you, if the evidence of the marriage is satisfactory to an English lawyer I have discovered in Paris and whose address I will give you, six hundred pounds will be paid over to you. It is there now, in the lawyer's hands. If not, I go home, and the law does not compel me to hand you over one farthing.'

She was silent, and began to pace up and down.

'Montjoie despises marriage,' she said presently.

'Try whether he despises money too,' said David, and could not for the life of him keep the sarcastic note out of his voice.

She bit her lip.

'And when, if it is done, must this precious thing be settled?'

'If your marriage does not take place within a month, Mr. O'Kelly—I will leave you his address,' he put his hand into his pocket—'has orders to return the money——'

'To whom?' she inquired, struck by his sudden break.

'To me, of course,' he said slowly. 'Is it perfectly plain? do you understand? Now, then, listen. I have inquired what the law is—you will have to be married both at the mairie and by the chaplain at the British embassy.'

She stopped suddenly in her walk and confronted him.

'If I am married at all,' she said abruptly, 'I shall be married as a Catholic.'

'A Catholic!' David stared at her. She enjoyed his astonishment.

'Oh, I have had that in my mind for a long time,' she said scornfully. 'There is a priest at that church with the steps, you know, near that cemetery place on the hill, who is very much interested in me indeed. He speaks English. I used to go to confession. Madame Cervin told me all about it, and how to do it; I did it exact! Oh, if I am to be married, that will make it plain sailing enough. It was awkward—while——'

She broke off and sat down again beside him, pondering and smiling as he had seen her do in Manchester, when she had the prospect of a new dress or some amusement that excited her.

'How have you been able to think about such things?' he asked her, marvelling.

'Think about them! What was the good of that? It's the churches I like, and the priests. Now there is something to see in the Paris churches, like the Madeleine—worth a dozen St. Damian's,—you may

tell Dora that. The flowers and the dresses and the music—they *are* something like. And the priests——’

She smiled again, little meditative smiles, as though she were recalling her experiences.

‘Well, I don’t know that there’s much about them,’ she said at last; ‘they’re queer, and they’re awfully clever, and they want to manage you, of course.’

She stopped, quite unable to express herself any more fully. But it was evident that the traditional relation of the Catholic priest to his penitent had been to her a subject of curiosity and excitement—that she would gladly know more of it.

David could hardly believe his ears. He sat lost at first in the pure surprise of it, in the sense of Louie’s unlikeness to any other human creature he had ever seen. Then a gleam of satisfaction arose. He had heard of the hold on women possessed by the Catholic Church, and maintained by her marvellous, and on the whole admirable system of direction. For himself, he would have no priests of whatever Church. But his mind harboured none of the common Protestant rules and shibboleths. In God’s name, let the priests get hold of this sister of his!—if they could—when he——

‘Marry this man, then!’ he said to her at last, breaking the silence abruptly, ‘and square it with the Church, if you want to.’

‘Oh, indeed!’ she said mockingly. ‘So you have nothing to say against my turning Catholic? I should like to see uncle Reuben’s face.’

Her voice had the exultant mischief of a child. It was evident that her spirits were rising, that her mood towards her brother was becoming more amiable.

‘Nothing,’ he said dryly, replying to her question.

Then he got up and looked for his hat. She watched



him askance. 'What are you going for? I could get you some tea. *He* won't be in for hours.'

'I have said what I had to say. These'—taking a paper from his pocket and laying it down, 'are all the directions, legal and other, that concern you, as to the marriage. I drew them up this morning, with Mr. O'Kelly. I have given you his address. You can communicate with him at any time.'

'I can write to you, I suppose?'

'Better write to him,' he said quietly, 'he has instructions. He seemed to me a good sort.'

'Where are you going?'

'Back to Paris, and then—home.'

She placed herself in his way, so that the sunny light of the late afternoon, coming mostly from behind her, left her face in shadow.

'What'll you do without that money?' she asked abruptly.

He paused, getting together his answer with difficulty.

'I have the stock, and there is something left of the sixty pounds uncle Reuben brought. I shall do.'

'He'll muddle it all,' she said roughly. 'What's the good?'

And she folded her arms across her with the recklessness of one quite ready and eager, if need be, to fight her own battle, with her own weapons, in her own way.

'Get Mr. O'Kelly to keep it, if you can persuade him, and draw it by degrees. I'd have made a trust of it, if it had been enough; but it isn't. Twenty-four pounds a year: that's all you'd get, if we tied up the capital.'

She laughed. Evidently her acquaintance with Montjoie had enlarged her notions of money, which were precise and acute enough before.

'He spends that in a supper when he's in cash. I'll be curious to see whether, all in a lump, it'll be enough to make him marry me. Still, he is precious hard up: he don't stir out till dark, he's so afraid of meeting people.'

'That's my hope,' said David heavily, hardly knowing what he said. 'Good-bye.'

'Hope!' she re-echoed bitterly. 'What d'you want to tie me to him for, for good and all?'

And, turning away from him, she stared, frowning, through the dingy glass door into the darkening garden. In her mind there was once more that strange uprising swell of reaction—of hatred of herself and life.

Why, indeed? David could not have answered her question. He only knew that there was a blind instinct in him driving him to this, as the best that remained open—the only *amende* possible for what had been so vilely done by himself, by her, and by the man who had worked out her fall for a mere vicious whim. There was no word in any mouth, it seemed to him, of his being in love with her.

There were all sorts of whirling thoughts in his mind—fragments cast up by the waves of desolate experience he had been passing through—inarticulate cries of warning, judgment, pain. But he could put nothing into words.

'Good-bye, Louie!'

She turned and stood looking at him.

'What made you get ill?' she inquired, eyeing him.

His thirsty heart drank in the change of tone.

'I don't sleep,' he said hurriedly. 'It's the noise. The Nord station is never quiet. Well, mind you've got to bring that off. Keep the papers safe. Good-bye, for a long time.'

'I can come over when I want?' she said half sullenly.

‘Yes,’ he assented, ‘but you won’t want.’

He drew her by the hand, with a solemn tremulous feeling, and kissed her on the cheek. He would have liked to give her their father’s dying letter. It was there, in his coat-pocket. But he shrank from the emotion of it. No, he must go. He had done all he could.

She opened the door for him, and took him to the garden-gate in silence.

‘When I’m married,’ she said shortly, ‘if ever I am—Lord knows!—you can tell Uncle Reuben and Dora?’

‘Yes. Good-bye.’

The gate closed behind him. He went away, hurrying towards the Auteuil station.

When he landed again in the Paris streets, he stood irresolute.

‘One more look,’ he said to himself, ‘one more.’

And he turned down the Rue Chantal. There was the familiar archway, and the light shining behind the porter’s door. Was her room already stripped and bare, or was the broken glass—poor dumb prophet!—still there, against the wall?

He wandered on through the lamp-lit city and the crowded pavements. Elise—the wraith of her—went with him, hand in hand, ghost with ghost, amid this multitude of men. Sometimes, breaking from this dream-companionship, he would wake with terror to the perception of his true, his utter loneliness. He was not made to be alone, and the thought that nowhere in this great Paris was there a single human being to whose friendly eye or hand he might turn him in his need, swept across him from time to time, contracting the heart. Dora—Mr. Ancrum—if they knew, they would be sorry.

Then again indifference and blankness came upon

him, and he could only move feebly on, seeing everything in a blur and mist. After these long days and nights of sleeplessness, semi-starvation, and terrible excitement, every nerve was sick, every organ out of gear.

The lights of the Tuileries, the stately pile of the Louvre, under a grey driving sky.—There would be rain soon—ah, there it came! the great drops hissing along the pavement. He pushed on to the river, careless of the storm, soothed, indeed, by the cool dashes of rain in his face and eyes.

The Place de la Concorde seemed to him as day, so brilliant was the glare of its lamps. To the right, the fairyland of the Champs-Élysées, the trees tossing under the sudden blast; in front, the black trench of the river. On, on—let him see it all—gather it all into his accusing heart and brain, and then at a stroke blot out the inward and the outward vision, and ‘cease upon the midnight with no pain’!

He walked till he could walk no more; then he sank on a dark seat on the Quai Saint-Michel, cursing himself. Had he no nerve left for the last act—was that what this delay, this fooling meant? Coward!

But not here! not in these streets—this publicity! Back—to the little noisome room. There lock the door, and make an end!

On the way northward, at the command of a sudden caprice, he sat down outside a blazing café on the Boulevard and ordered absinthe, which he had never tasted. While he waited he looked round on the painted women, on the men escorting them, on the loungers with their newspapers and cigars, the shouting, supercilious waiters. But all the little odious details of the scene escaped him; he felt only the touchingness of his human comradeship, the yearning of a common life, bruised and wounded but still alive within him.

Then he drank the stuff they gave him, loathed it, paid and staggered on. When he reached his hotel he crept upstairs, dreading to meet any of the harsh-faced people who frowned as he passed them. He had done abject things these last three days to conciliate them—tipped the waiter, ordered food, not that he might eat it but that he might pay for it, bowed to the landlady—all to save the shrinking of his sore and quivering nerves. In vain! It seemed to him that since that last look from Elise as she nestled into the fern, there had been no kindness for him in human eyes—save, perhaps, from that woman with the child.

As he dragged himself up to his fourth floor, the stimulant he had taken began to work upon his starved senses. The key was in his door, he turned it and fell into his room, while the door, with the key still in it, swung to behind him. Guiding himself by the furniture, he reached the only chair the room possessed—an arm-chair of the commonest and cheapest hotel sort, which, because of the uncertainty of its legs, the *femme de chambre* had propped up against the bed. He sat down in it and his head fell back on the counterpane. There was much to do. He had to write to John about the sale of his stock and the payment of his debts. He had to put his father's letter into an envelope for Louie, to send all the papers and letters he had on him and a last message to Mr. Ancrum, and then to post these letters, so that nothing private might fall into the hands of the French police, who would, of course, open his bag.

While these thoughts were rising in him, a cloud came over the brain, bringing with it, as it seemed, the first moment of ease which had been his during this awful fortnight. Before he yielded himself to it he thrust his hand into his coat-pocket with a sudden vague anxiety to feel what was there. But even as

he withdrew his fingers they relaxed; a black object came with them, and fell unheeded, first on his knee, then on to a coat lying on the floor between him and the window.

A quarter of an hour afterwards there was a stir and voices on the landing outside. Some one knocked at the door of No. 139. No answer. 'The key is in the door. *Ouvrez donc!*' cried the waiter, as he ran downstairs again to the restaurant, which was still crowded. The visitor opened the door and peeped in. Some quick words broke from him. He rushed in and up to the bed. But directly the heavy feverish breathing of the figure in the chair caught his ear his look of sudden horror relaxed, and he fell back, looking at the sleeping youth.

It was a piteous sight he saw! Exhaustion, helplessness, sorrow, physical injury, and moral defeat, were written in every line of the poor drawn face and shrunken form. The brow was furrowed, the breathing hard, the mouth dry and bloodless. Upon the mind of the new-comer, possessed as it was with the image of what David Grieve had been two short months before, the effect of the spectacle was presently overwhelming.

He fell on his knees beside the sleeper. But as he did so, he noticed the black thing on the floor, stooped to it, and took it up. That it should be a loaded revolver seemed to him at that moment the most natural thing in the world, little used as he personally was to such possessions. He looked at it carefully, took out the two cartridges it contained, put them into one pocket and the revolver into the other.

Then he laid his arm round the lad's neck.

'David!'

The young man woke directly and sat up, shaking with terror and excitement. He pushed his visitor

from him, looking at him with defiance. Then he slipped his hand inside his coat and sprang up with a cry.

‘David!—dear boy—dear fellow!’

The voice penetrated the lad’s ear. He caught his visitor and dragged him forward to the light. It fell on the twisted face and wet eyes of Mr. Ancrum. So startling was the vision, so poignant were the associations which it set vibrating, that David stood staring and trembling, struck dumb.

‘Oh, my poor lad! my poor lad! John wanted me to come yesterday, and I delayed. I was a selfish wretch. Now I will take you home.’

David fell again upon his chair, too feeble to speak, too feeble even to weep, the little remaining colour ebbing from his cheeks. The minister used all his strength, and laid him on the bed. Then he rang and made even the callous and haughty madame, who was presently summoned, listen to and obey him while he sent for brandy and a doctor, and let the air of the night into the stifling room.

## CHAPTER XII

IN two or three days the English doctor who was attending David strongly advised Mr. Ancrum to get his charge home. The fierce strain his youth had sustained acting through the nervous system had disordered almost every bodily function, and the collapse which followed Mr. Ancrum’s appearance was severe. He would lie in his bed motionless and speechless, volunteered no confidence, and showed hardly any rallying power.

‘Get him out of this furnace and that doghole of a

room,' said the doctor. 'He has come to grief here somehow—that's plain. You won't make anything of him till you move him.'

When the lad was at last stretched on the deck of a Channel steamer speeding to the English coast, and the sea breeze had brought a faint touch of returning colour to his cheek, he asked the question he had never yet had the physical energy to ask.

'Why did you come, and how did you find me?'

Then it appeared that the old cashier at Heywood's bank, who had taken a friendly interest in the young bookseller since the opening of his account, had dropped a private word to John in the course of conversation, which had alarmed that youth not a little. His own last scrawl from David had puzzled and disquieted him, and he straightway marched off to Mr. Ancrum to consult. Whereupon the minister wrote cautiously and affectionately to David asking for some prompt and full explanation of things for his friends' sake. The letter was, as we know, never opened, and therefore never answered. Whereupon John's jealous misery on Louie's account and Mr. Ancrum's love for David had so worked that the minister had broken in upon his scanty savings and started for Paris at a few hours' notice. Once in the Rue Chantal he had come easily on David's track.

Naturally he had inquired after Louie as soon as David was in a condition to be questioned at all. The young man hesitated a moment, then he said resolutely, 'She is married,' and would say no more. Mr. Ancrum pressed the matter a little, but his patient merely shook his head, and the sight of him as he lay there on the pillow was soon enough to silence the minister.

On the evening before they left Paris he called for a telegraph form, wrote a message and paid the reply,



but Mr. Ancrum saw nothing of either. When the reply arrived David crushed it in his hand with a strange look, half bitterness, half relief, and flung it behind a piece of furniture standing near.

Now, on the cool, wind-swept deck, he seemed more inclined to talk than he had been yet. He asked questions about John and the Lomaxes—he even inquired after Lucy, as to whom the minister who had lately improved an acquaintance with Dora and her father, begun through David, could only answer vaguely that he believed she was still in the south. But he volunteered nothing about his own affairs or the cause of the state in which Mr. Ancrum had found him.

Every now and then, indeed, as they stood together at the side of the vessel, David leaning heavily against it, his words would fail him altogether, and he would be left staring stupidly, the great black eyes widening, the lower lip falling—over the shifting brilliance of the sea.

Ancrum was almost sure too that in the darkness of their last night in Paris there had been, hour after hour, a sound of hard and stifled weeping, mingled with the noises from the street and from the station; and to-day the youth in the face was more quenched than ever, in spite of the signs of reviving health. There had been a woman in the case, of course: Louie might have misbehaved herself; but after all the world is so made that no sister can make a brother suffer as David had evidently suffered—and then there was the revolver! About this last, after one or two restless movements of search, which Mr. Ancrum interpreted, David had never asked, and the minister, timid man of peace that he was, had resold it before leaving.

Well, it was a problem, and it must be left to time. Meanwhile Mr. Ancrum was certainly astonished that

any love affair should have had such a destructive volcanic power with the lad. For it was no mere raw and sensuous nature, no idle and morbid brain. One would have thought that so many different aptitudes and capacities would have kept each other in check.

As they neared Manchester, David grew plainly restless and ill at ease. He looked out sharply for the name of each succeeding town, half turning afterwards, as though to speak to his companion; but it was not till they were within ten minutes of the Central Station that he said—

‘John will want to know about Louie. She is married,—as I told you,—to a French sculptor. I have handed over to her all my father’s money—that is why I drew it out.’

Mr. Ancrum edged up closer to him—all ears—waiting for more. But there was nothing more.

‘And you are satisfied?’ he said at last.

David nodded and looked out of window intently.

‘What is the man’s name?’

David either did not or would not hear, and Mr. Ancrum let him alone. But the news was startling. So the boy had stripped himself, and must begin the world again as before! What had that minx been after?

Manchester again. David looked out eagerly from the cab, his hand trembling on his knee, beads of perspiration on his face.

They turned up the narrow street, and there in the distance to the right was the stall and the shop, and a figure on the steps. Mr. Ancrum had sent a card before them, and John was on the watch.

The instant the cab stopped, and before the driver could dismount, John had opened the door. Putting his head in he peered at the pair inside, and at the opposite seat with his small short-sighted eyes.

'Where is she?' he said hoarsely, barring the way.

Mr. Ancrum looked at his companion. David had shrunk back into the corner, with a white hangdog look, and said nothing. The minister interposed.

'David will tell you all,' he said gently. 'First help me in with him, and the bags. He is a sick man.'

With a huge effort John controlled himself, and they got inside. Then he shut the shop door and put his back against it.

'Tell me where she is,' he repeated shortly.

'She is married,' David said in a low voice, but looking up from the chair on which he had sunk. 'By now—she is married. I heard by telegram last night that all was arranged for to-day.'

The lad opposite made a sharp inarticulate sound which startled the minister's ear. Then clutching the handle of the door, he resumed sharply—

'Who has she married?'

The assumption of the right to question was arrogance itself—strange in the dumb, retiring creature whom the minister had hitherto known only as David's slave and shadow!

'A French sculptor,' said David steadily, but propping his head and hand against the counter, so as to avoid John's stare—'a man called Montjoie. I was a brute—I neglected her. She got into his hands. Then I sent for all my money to bribe him to marry her. And he has.'

'You—you *blackguard*!' cried John.

David straightened instinctively under the blow, and his eyes met John's for one fierce moment. Then Mr. Ancrum thought he would have fainted. The minister took rough hold of John by the shoulders.

'If you can't stay and hold your tongue,' he said, 'you must go. He is worn out with the journey, and I shall get him to bed. Here's some money: suppose

you run to the house round the corner, in Prince's Street; ask if they've got some strong soup, and, if they have, hurry back with it. Come—look sharp. And—one moment—you've been sleeping here, I suppose? Well, I shall take your room for a bit, if that'll suit you. This fellow'll have to be looked after.'

The little lame creature spoke like one who meant to have his way. John took the coin, hesitated, and stumbled out.

For days afterwards there was silence between him and David, except for business directions. He avoided being in the shop with his employer, and would stand for hours on the step, ostensibly watching the stall, but in reality doing no business that he could help. Whenever Mr. Ancrum caught sight of him he was leaning against the wall, his hat slouched over his eyes, his hands in his pockets, utterly inert and listless, more like a log than a human being. Still he was no less stout, lumpish, and pink-faced than before. His fate might have all the tragic quality; nature had none the less inexorably endowed him with the externals of farce.

Meanwhile David dragged himself from his bed to the shop and set to work to pick up dropped threads. The customers, who had been formerly interested in him, discovered his return, and came in to inquire why he had been so long away, or, in the case of one or two, whether he had executed certain commissions in Paris. The explanation of illness, however, circulated from the first moment by Mr. Ancrum, and perforce adopted—though with an inward rage and rebellion—by David himself, was amply sufficient to cover his omissions and inattentions, and to ease his resumption of his old place. His appearance indeed was still ghastly. The skin of the face had the tightened, transparent look of weakness; the eyes, reddened

and sunk, showed but little of their old splendour between the blue circles beneath and the heavy brows above; even the hair seemed to have lost its boyish curl, and fell in harsh, troublesome waves over the forehead, whence its owner was perpetually and impatiently thrusting it back. All the bony structure of the face had been emphasised at the expense of its young grace and bloom, and the new indications of moustache and beard did but add to its striking and painful black and white. And the whole impression of change was completed by the melancholy aloofness, the shrinking distrust with which eyes once overflowing with the frankness and eagerness of one of the most accessible of human souls now looked out upon the world.

‘Was it fever?’ said a young Owens College professor who had taken a lively interest from the beginning in the clever lad’s venture. ‘Upon my word! you do look pulled down. Paris may be the first city in the world—it is an insanitary hole all the same. So you never found time to inquire after those Molière editions for me?’

David racked his brains. What was it he had been asked to do? He remembered half an hour’s talk on one of those early days with a bookseller on the Quai Voltaire—was it about this commission? He could not recall.

‘No, sir,’ he said, stammering and flushing. ‘I believe I did ask somewhere, but I can’t remember.’

‘It’s very natural, very natural,’ said the professor kindly. ‘Never mind. I’ll send you the particulars again, and you can keep your eyes open for me. And, look here, take your business easy for a while. You’ll get on—you’re sure to get on—if you only recover your health.’

David opened the door for him in silence.

The reawakening of his old life in him was strange and slow. When he first found himself back among his books and catalogues, his ledgers and business memoranda, he was bewildered and impatient. What did these elaborate notes, with their cabalistic signs and abbreviations—whether as to the needs of customers, or the whereabouts of books, or the history of prices—mean or matter? He was like a man who has lost a sense. Then the pressure of certain debts which should have been met out of the money in the bank first put some life into him. He looked into his financial situation and found it grave, though not desperate. All hope of a large and easy expansion of business was, of course, gone. The loss of his capital had reduced him to the daily shifts and small laborious accumulations with which he had begun. But this factor in his state was morally of more profit to him at the moment than any other. With such homely medicines nature and life can often do most for us.

Such was Ancrum's belief, and in consequence he showed a very remarkable wisdom during these early days of David's return.

'As far as I can judge, there has been a bad shake to the heart in more senses than one,' had been the dry remark of the Paris doctor; 'and as for nervous system, it's a mercy he's got any left. Take care of him, but for Heaven's sake don't make an invalid of him—that would be the finish.'

So that Ancrum offered no fussy opposition to the resumption of the young man's daily work, though at first it produced a constant battle with exhaustion and depression. But never day or night did the minister forget his charge. He saw that he ate and drank; he enforced a few common-sense remedies for the nervous ills which the moral convulsion had left behind it, ills which the lad in his irritable humiliation would fain

have hidden even from him; above all he knew how to say a word which kept Dora and Daddy and other friends away for a time, and how to stand between David and that choked and miserable John.

He had the strength of mind also to press for no confidence and to expect no thanks. He had little fear of any further attempts at suicide, though he would have found it difficult perhaps to explain why. But instinctively he felt that for all practical purposes David had been mad when he found him, and that he was mad no longer. He was wretched, and only a fraction of his mind was in Manchester and in his business—that was plain. But, in however imperfect a way, he was again master of himself; and the minister bided his time, putting his ultimate trust in one of the finest mental and physical constitutions he had ever known.

In about ten days David took up his hat one afternoon and, for the first time, ventured into the streets. On his return he was walking down Potter Street in a storm of wind and rain, when he ran against some one who was holding an umbrella right in front of her and battling with the weather. In his recoil he saw that it was Dora.

Dora too looked up, a sudden radiant pleasure in her face overflowing her soft eyes and lips.

‘Oh, Mr. Grieve! And are you really better?’

‘Yes,’ he said briefly. ‘May I walk with you a bit?’

‘Oh no!—I don’t believe you ought to be out in such weather. I’ll just come the length of the street with you.’

And she turned and walked with him, chattering fast, and of course, from the point of view of an omniscience which could not have been hers, foolishly. Had he liked Paris?—what he saw of it at least before he had been ill?—and how long had he been ill? Why

had he not let Mr. Ancrum or some one know sooner? And would he tell her more about Louie? She heard that she was married, but there was so much she, Dora, wanted to hear.

To his first scanty answers she paid in truth but small heed, for the joy of seeing him again was soon effaced by the painful impression of his altered aspect. The more she looked at him, the more her heart went out to him; her whole being became an effusion of pity and tenderness, and her simplest words, maidenly and self-restrained as she was, were in fact charged with something electric, ineffable. His suffering, his neighbourhood, her own sympathy—she was taken up, overwhelmed by these general impressions. Inferences, details escaped her.

But as she touched on the matter of Louie, and they were now at his own steps, he said to her hurriedly—

‘Walk a little further, and I’ll tell you. John’s in there.’

She opened her eyes, not understanding, and then demurred a little on the ground of his health and the rain.

‘Oh, I’m all right,’ he said impatiently. ‘Look here, will you walk to Chetham’s Library? There’ll be a quiet place there, in the reading room—sure to be—where we can talk.’

She assented, and very soon they were mounting the black oak stairs leading to this old corner of Manchester. At the top of the stairs they saw in the distance, at the end of the passage on to which open the readers’ studies, each with its lining of folios and its oaken lattice, a librarian, who nodded to David, and took a look at Dora. Further on they stumbled over a small boy from the charity school who wished to lionise them over the whole building. But when he had been routed, they found the beautiful panelled and painted



reading-room quite empty, and took possession of it in peace. David led the way to an oriel window he had become familiar with in the off-times of his first years at Manchester, and they seated themselves there with a low sloping desk between them, looking out on the wide rain-swept yard outside, the buildings of the grammar-school, and the black mass of the cathedral.

Manchester had never been more truly Manchester than on this dark July afternoon, with its low shapeless clouds, its darkness, wind, and pelting rain. David, staring out through the lozenge panes at the familiar gloom beyond, was suddenly carried by repulsion into the midst of a vision which was an agony—of a spring forest cut by threadlike paths; of a shadeless sun; of a white city steeped in charm, in gaiety.

Dora watched him timidly, new perceptions and alarms dawning in her.

‘You were going to tell me about Louie,’ she said.

He returned to himself, and abruptly turned with his back to the window, so that he saw the outer world no more.

‘You heard that she was married?’

‘Yes.’

‘She has married a brute. It was partly my fault. I wanted to be rid of her; she got in my way. This man was in the same house; I left her to herself, and partly, I believe, to spite me, she went off with him. Then at last when she wouldn’t leave him I made her marry him. I bribed him to marry her. And he did. I had just enough money to make it worth his while. But he will ill-treat her; and she won’t stay with him. She will go from bad to worse.’

Dora drew back, with her hand on the desk, staring at him with incredulous horror.

‘But you were ill?’ she stammered.

He shook his head.

'Never mind my being ill. I wanted you to know, because you were good to her, and I'm not going to be a hypocrite to you. Nobody else need know anything but that she's married, which is true. If I'd looked after her it mightn't have happened—perhaps. But I didn't look after her—I couldn't.'

His face, propped in his hands, was hidden from her. She was in a whirl of excitement and tragic impression—understanding something, divining more.

'Louie was always so self-willed,' she said trembling.

'Aye. That don't make it any better. You remember all I told you about her before? You know we didn't get on; she wasn't nice to me, and I didn't suit her, I suppose. But all this year, I don't know why, she's been on my mind from morning till night; I've always felt sure, somehow, that she would come to harm; and the worrying oneself about her—well! it has seemed *to grow into one's very bones*.'—He threw out the last words after a pause, in which he had seemed to search for some phrase wherewith to fit the energy of his feeling. 'I took her to Paris to keep her out of mischief. I had much rather have gone alone; but she would not ask you to take her in, and I couldn't leave her with John. Well, then, she got in my way—I told you—and I let her go to the dogs. There—it's done—*done!*'

He turned on his seat, one hand drumming the desk, while his eyes fixed themselves apparently on the portrait of Sir Humphry Chetham over the carved mantelpiece. His manner was hard and rapid; neither voice nor expression had any of the simplicity or directness of remorse.

Dora remained silent looking at him; her slender hands were pressed tight against either cheek; the tears rose slowly till they filled her grey eyes. . . .

'It is very sad,' she said in a low voice.

There was a pause.

'Yes—it's sad. So are most things in this world, perhaps. All natural wants seem just to lead us to misery sooner or later. And who gave them to us—who put us here—with no choice but just to go on blundering from one muddle into another?'

Their eyes met. It was as though he had remembered her religion, and could not, in his bitterness, refrain from an indirect fling at it.

As for her, what he said was strange and repellent to her. But her forlorn passion, so long trampled on, cried within her; her pure heart was one prayer, one exquisite throb of pain and pity.

'Did some one deceive you?' she asked, so low that the words seemed just breathed into the air.

'No,—I deceived myself.'

Then as he looked at her an impulse of confession crossed his mind. Sympathy, sincerity, womanly sweetness, these things he had always associated with Dora Lomax. Instinctively he had chosen her for a friend long ago as soon as their first foolish spars were over.

But the impulse passed away. He thought of her severity, her religion, her middle-class canons and judgments, which perhaps were all the stricter because of Daddy's laxities. What common ground between her and his passion, between her and Elise? No! if he must speak—if, in the end, he proved too weak to forbear wholly from speech—let it be to ears more practised, and more human!

So he choked back his words, and Dora felt instinctively that he would tell her no more. Her consciousness of this was a mingled humiliation and relief; it wounded her to feel that she had so little command of him; yet she dreaded what he might say. Paris was

a wicked place—so the world reported. Her imagination, sensitive, Christianised, ascetic, shrank from what he might have done. Perhaps the woman shrank too. Instead, she threw herself upon the thought, the bliss, that he was there again beside her, restored, rescued from the gulf, if gulf there had been.

He went back to the subject of Louie, and told her as much as a girl of Dora's kind could be told of what he himself knew of Louie's husband. In the course of his two days' search for them, which had included an interview with Madame Cervin, he had become tolerably well acquainted with Montjoie's public character and career. Incidentally parts of the story of Louie's behaviour came in, and for one who knew her as Dora did, her madness and wilfulness emerged, could be guessed at, little as the brother intended to excuse himself thereby. How, indeed, should he excuse himself? Louie's character was a fixed quantity to be reckoned on by all who had dealings with her. One might as well excuse oneself for letting a lunatic escape by the pretext of his lunacy. Dora perfectly understood his tone. Yet in her heart of hearts she forgave him—for she knew not what!—became his champion. There was a dry sharpness of self-judgment, a settled conviction of coming ill in all he said which wrung her heart. And how blanched he was by that unknown misery! How should she not pity, not forgive? It was the impotence of her own feeling to express itself that swelled her throat. And poor Lucy, too—ah! poor Lucy.

Suddenly, as he was speaking, he noticed his companion more closely, the shabbiness of the little black hat and jacket, the new lines round the eyes and mouth.

'You have not been well,' he said abruptly. 'How has your father been going on?'

She started and tried to answer quietly. But her nerves had been shaken by their talk, and by that inward play of emotion which had gone on out of his sight. Quite unexpectedly she broke down, and, covering her eyes with one hand, began to sob gently.

'I can't do anything with him now, poor father,' she said, when she could control herself. 'He won't listen to me at all. The debts are beginning to be dreadful, and the business is going down fast. I don't know what we shall do. And it all makes him worse—drives him to drink.'

David thought a minute, lifted out of himself for the first time.

'Shall I come to-night to see him?'

'Oh do!' she said eagerly; 'come about nine o'clock. I will tell him—perhaps that will keep him in.'

Then she went into more details than she had yet done; named the creditors who were pressing; told how her church-work, though she worked herself blind night and day, could do but little for them; how both the restaurant and the reading-room were emptying, and she could now get no servants to stay, but Sarah, because of her father's temper.

It seemed to him as he listened that the story, with its sickened hope and on-coming fate, was all in some strange way familiar; it or something like it was to have been expected; for him the strange and jarring thing now would have been to find a happy person. He was in that young morbid state when the mind hangs its own cloud over the universe.

But Dora got up to go, tying on her veil with shaking hands. She was so humbly grateful to him that he was sorry for her—that he could spare a thought from his own griefs for her.

As they went down the dark stairs together, he asked after Lucy. She was now staying with some

relations at Wakely, a cotton town in the valley of the Irwell, Dora said; but she would probably go back to Hastings for the winter. It was now settled that she and her father could not get on; and the step-mother that was to be—Purcell, however, was taking his time—was determined not to be bothered with her.

David listened with a certain discomfort. 'It was what she did for me,' he thought, 'that set him against her for good and all. Old brute!'

Aloud he said: 'I wrote to her, you know, and sent her that book. She *did* write me a queer letter back—it was all dashes and splashes—about the street-preachings on the beach, and a blind man who sang hymns. I can't remember why she hated him so particularly!'

She answered his faint smile. Lucy was a child for both of them. Then he took her to the door of the Parlour, noticing, as he parted from her, how dingy and neglected the place looked.

Afterwards—directly he had left her—the weight of his pain which had been lightened for an hour descended upon him again, shutting the doors of the senses, leaving him alone within, face to face with the little figure which haunted him day and night. During the days since his return from Paris the faculty of projective imagination, which had endowed his childhood with a second world, and peopled it with the incidents and creatures of his books, had grown to an abnormal strength. Behind the stage on which he was now painfully gathering together the fragments of his old life, it created for him another, where, amid scenes richly set and lit with perpetual summer, he lived with Elise, walked with her, watched her, lay at her feet, quarrelled with her, forgave her. His drama did not depend on memory alone, or rather it was memory passing into creation. Within its bounds

he was himself and not himself; his part was loftier than any he had ever played in reality; his eloquence was no longer tongue-tied—it flowed and penetrated. His love might be cruel, but he was on her level, nay, her master; he could reproach, wrestle with, command her; and at the end evoke the pardoning flight into each other's arms—confession—rapture.

Till suddenly, poor fool! a little bolt shot from the bow of memory—the image of a *diligence* rattling along a white road—or of black rain-beaten quays, with their lines of wavering lamps—or of a hideous upper room with blue rep furniture where one could neither move nor breathe—would strike his dream to fragments, and as it fell to ruins within him, his whole being would become one tumult of inarticulate cries—delirium—anguish—with which the self at the heart of all seemed to be wrestling for life.

It was so to-day after he left Dora. First the vision, the enchantment—then the agony, the sob of desolation which could hardly be kept down. He saw nothing in the streets. He walked on past the Exchange, where an unusual crowd was gathered, elbowing his way through it mechanically, but not in truth knowing that it was there.

When he reached the shop he ran past John, who was reading a newspaper, up to his room and locked the door.

About an hour afterwards Mr. Ancrum came in, all excitement, a batch of papers under his arms.

'It is going to be war, John! *War*—I tell you! and such a war. They 'll be beaten, those braggarts, if there 's justice in heaven. The streets are all full; I could hardly get here; everybody talking of how it will affect Manchester. Time enough to think about that! What a set of selfish beasts we all are! Where 's David?'

‘Come in an hour ago!’ said John sullenly; ‘he went upstairs.’

‘Ah, he will have heard—the placards are all over the place.’

The minister went upstairs and knocked at David’s door.

‘David!’

‘All right,’ said a voice from inside.

‘David, what do you think of the news?’

‘What news?’ after a pause.

‘Why, the war, man! Haven’t you seen the evening paper?’

No answer. The minister stood listening at the door. Then a tender look dawned in his odd grey face.

‘David, look here, I’ll push you the paper under the door. You’re tired, I suppose—done yourself up with your walk?’

‘I’ll be down to supper,’ said the voice from inside, shortly. ‘Will you push in the paper?’

The minister descended, and sat by himself in the kitchen thinking. He was a wiser man now than when he had gone out, and not only as to that reply of the King of Prussia to the French ultimatum on the subject of the Hohenzollern candidature.

For he had met Barbier in the street. How to keep the voluble Frenchman from bombarding David in his shattered state had been one of Mr. Ancrum’s most anxious occupations since his return. It had been done, but it had been difficult. For to whom did David owe his first reports of Paris if not to the old comrade who had sent him there, found him a lodging, and taught him to speak French so as not to disgrace himself and his country? However, Ancrum had found means to intercept Barbier’s first visit, and had checkmated his attempts ever since. As a natural result,



Barbier was extremely irritable. Illness—stuff! The lad had been getting into scrapes—that he would swear.

On this occasion, when Ancrum stumbled across him, he found Barbier, at first bubbling over with the war news; torn different ways; now abusing the Emperor for a *cochon* and a *fou*, prophesying unlimited disaster for France, and sneering at the ranting crowds on the boulevards; the next moment spouting the same anti-Prussian madness with which his whole unfortunate country was at the moment infected. In the midst of his gallop of talk, however, the old man suddenly stopped, took off his hat, and running one excited hand through his bristling tufts of grey hair pointed to Ancrum with the other.

'*Halte là!*' he said, 'I know what your young rascal has been after. I know, and I'll be bound you don't. Trust a lover for hoodwinking a priest. Come along here.'

And putting his arm through Ancrum's, he swept him away, repeating, as they walked, the substance of a letter from his precious nephew, in which the Barbizon episode as it appeared to the inhabitants of No. 7 Rue Chantal and to the students of Taranne's *atelier de femmes* was related, with every embellishment of witticism and *blague* that the imagination of a French *rapin* could suggest. Mademoiselle Delaunay was not yet restored, according to the writer, to the *atelier* which she adorned. '*On criait au scandale,*' mainly because she was such a clever little animal, and the others envied and hated her. She had removed to a studio near the Luxembourg, and Taranne was said to be teaching her privately. Meanwhile Dubois requested his dear uncle to supply him with information as to *l'autre*; it would be gratefully received by an appreciative circle. As for *la sœur de l'autre*, the

dear uncle no doubt knew that she had migrated to the studio of Monsieur Montjoie, an artist whose little affairs in the *genre* had already, before her advent, attained a high degree of interest and variety. On a review of all the circumstances, the dear uncle would perhaps pardon the writer if he were less disposed than before to accept those estimable views of the superiority of the English *morale* to the French, which had been so ably impressed upon him during his visit to Manchester.

For after a very short stay at Brussels the nephew had boldly and suddenly pushed over to England, and had spent a fortnight in Barbier's lodgings reconnoitering his uncle. As to the uncle, Xavier had struck him, on closer inspection, as one of the most dissolute young reprobates he had ever beheld. He had preached to him like a father, holding up to him the image of his own absent favourite, David Grieve, as a brilliant illustration of what could be achieved even in this wicked world by morals and capacity. And in the intervals he had supplied the creature with money and amused himself with his *gaminerie* from morning till night. On their parting the uncle had with great frankness confessed to the nephew the general opinion he had formed of his character; all the same they were now embarked on a tolerably frequent correspondence; and Dubois' ultimate chance of obtaining his uncle's savings, on the *chasse* of which he had come to England, would have seemed to the cool observer by no means small.

'But now, look here,' said Barbier, taking off his spectacles to wipe away the 'merry tear' which dimmed them, after the recapitulation of Xavier's last letter, 'no more nonsense! I come and have it out with that young man. I sent him to Paris, and I'll know what he did there. *He* 's not made of burnt sugar. Of

course he 's broken his heart—we all do. Serve him right.'

'It 's easy to laugh,' said Ancrum dryly, 'only these young fellows have sometimes an uncomfortable way of vindicating their dignity by shooting themselves.'

Barbier started and looked interrogative.

'Now suppose you listen to me,' said the minister.

And the two men resumed their patrol of Albert Square while Ancrum described his rescue of David. The story was simply told but impressive. Barbier whistled, stared, and surrendered. Nay, he went to the other extreme. He loved the absurd, but he loved the romantic more. An hour before, David's adventures had been to him a subject of comic opera. As Ancrum talked, they took on 'the grand style,' and at the end he could no more have taken liberties with his old pupil than with the hero of the *Nuit de Mai*. He became excited, sympathetic, declamatory, tore open old sores, and Mr. Ancrum had great difficulty in getting rid of him.

So now the minister was sitting at home meditating. Through the atmosphere of mockery with which Dubois had invested the story he saw the outlines of it with some clearness.

### CHAPTER XIII

IN the midst of his meditations, however, the minister did not forget to send John out for David's supper, and when David appeared, white, haggard, and exhausted, it was to find himself thought for with a care like a woman's. The lad, being sick and irritable, showed more resentment than gratitude; pushed away his food, looking sombrely the while at the dry bread

and tea which formed the minister's invariable evening meal as though to ask when he was to be allowed his rational freedom again to eat or fast as he pleased. He scarcely answered Ancrum's remarks about the war, and finally he got up heavily, saying he was going out.

'You ought to be in your bed,' said Ancrum, protesting almost for the first time, 'and it's there you will be—tied by the leg—if you don't take a decent care of yourself.'

David took no notice and went. He dragged himself to the German Athenæum, of which he had become a member in the first flush of his inheritance. There were the telegrams from Paris, and an eager crowd reading and discussing them. As he pushed his way in at last and read, the whole scene rose before him as though he were there—the summer boulevards with their trees and kiosks, the moving crowds, the shouts, the 'Marseillaise'—the blind infectious madness of it all. And one short fortnight ago, what man in Europe could have guessed that such a day was already on the knees of the gods?

Afterwards, on the way to the Parlour, he talked to Elise about it,—placing her on the boulevards with the rest, and himself beside her to guard her from the throng. Hour by hour, this morbid gift of his, though it tortured him, provided an outlet for passion, saved him from numbness and despair.

When he got to Dora's sitting-room he found Daddy sitting there, smoking sombrely over the empty grate. He had expected a flood of questions, and had steeled himself to meet them. Nothing of the sort. The old man took very little notice of him and his travels. Considering the petulant advice with which Daddy had sent him off, David was astonished and, in the end, piqued. He recovered the tongue which he had lost

for Ancrum, and was presently discussing the war like anybody else. Reminiscences of the talk amid which he had lived during those Paris weeks came back to them; and he repeated some of them which bore on the present action of Napoleon III. and his ministry, with a touch of returning fluency. He was, in fact, playing for Daddy's attention.

Daddy watched him silently with a wild and furtive eye. At last, looking round to see whether Dora was there, and finding that she had gone out, he laid a lean long hand on David's knee.

'That 'll do, Davy. Davy, why were you all that time away?'

The young man drew himself up suddenly, brought back to realities from this first brief moment of something like forgetfulness. He tried for his common excuse of illness; but it stuck in his throat.

'I can't tell you, Daddy,' he said at last, slowly. 'I might tell you lies, but I won't. It concerns myself alone.'

Daddy still bent forward, his peaked wizard's face peering at his companion.

'You've been in trouble, Davy?'

'Yes, Daddy. But if you ask me questions I shall go.'

He spoke with a sudden fierce resolution.

Daddy paid no attention. He threw himself back in his chair with a long breath.

'Bedad, and I knew it, Davy! But sorrow a bit o' pity will you get out o' me, my boy—sorrow a bit!'

He lay staring at his companion with a glittering hostile look.

'By the powers!' he said presently, 'to be a gossoon of twenty again and throubled about a woman!'

David sprang up.

'Well, Daddy, I 'll bid you good night! I wanted to

hear something about your own affairs, which don't seem to be flourishing. But I'll wait till Miss Dora's at home.'

'Sit down, sit down again!' cried Lomax angrily, catching him by the arm. 'I'll not meddle with you. Yes, we're in a bad way, a deuced bad way, if you listen to Dora. If it weren't for her I'd have walked myself off long ago and let the devil take the creditors.'

David sat down and tried to get at the truth. But Daddy turned restive, and now invited the traveller's talk he had before repelled. He fell into his own recollections of the Paris streets in '48, and his vanity enjoyed showing this slip of a fellow that old Lomax was well acquainted with France and French politics before he was born.

Presently Dora came in, saw that her father had been beguiled into foregoing his usual nocturnal amusements, and looked soft gratitude at David. But as for him, he had never realised so vividly the queer aloofness and slipperiness of Daddy's nature, nor the miserable insecurity of Dora's life. Such men were not meant to have women depending on them.

He went downstairs pondering what could be done for the old vagabond. Drink had indeed made ravages since he had seen him last. For Dora's sake the young man recalled with eagerness some statements and suggestions in a French treatise on 'L'Alcoolisme' he chanced to have been turning over among his foreign scientific stock. Dora, no doubt, had invoked the parson; he would endeavour to bring in the doctor. And there was a young one, a frequenter of the stall in Birmingham Street, not as yet overburdened with practice, who occurred to him as clever and likely to help.

Nor did he forget his purpose. The very next

morning he got hold of the young man in question. Out came the French book, which contained the record of a famous Frenchman's experiments, and the two hung over it together in David's little back room, till the doctor's views of booksellers and their probable minds were somewhat enlarged, and David felt something of the old intellectual glow which these scientific problems of mind and matter had awakened in him during the winter. Then he walked his physician off to Daddy during the dinner hour and boldly introduced him as a friend. The young doctor, having been forewarned, treated the situation admirably, took up a jaunty and jesting tone, and, finally, putting morals entirely aside, invited Daddy to consider himself as a scientific case, and deal with himself as such for the benefit of knowledge.

Daddy was feeling ill and depressed; David struck him as an 'impudent varmint,' and the doctor as little better; but the lad's solicitude nevertheless flattered the old featherbrain, and in the end he fell into a burst of grandiloquent and self-excusing confidence. The doctor played him; prescribed; and when he and David left together it really seemed as though the old man from sheer curiosity about and interest in his own symptoms would probably make an attempt to follow the advice given him.

Dora came in while the three were still joking and discussing. Her face clouded as she listened, and when David and the doctor left she gave them a cool and shrinking good-bye which puzzled David.

Daddy, however, after a little while, mended considerably, developed an enthusiasm for his self-appointed doctor, and, what was still better, a strong excitement about his own affairs. When it came to the stage of a loan for the meeting of the more pressing liabilities, of fresh and ingenious efforts to attract

customers, and of a certain gleam of returning prosperity, David's concern for his old friend very much dropped again. His former vivid interest in the human scene and the actors in it, as such, was not yet recovered; in these weeks weariness and lassitude overtook each reviving impulse and faculty in turn.

He was becoming more and more absorbed, too, by the news from France. Its first effect upon him was one of irritable repulsion. Barbier and Hugo had taught him to loathe the Empire; and had not he and she read *Les Châtiments* together, and mocked the Emperor's carriage as it passed them in the streets? The French telegrams in the English papers, with their accounts of the vapouring populace, the wild rhetoric in the Chamber, and the general outburst of *funfaronnade*, seemed to make the French nation one with the Empire in its worst aspects, and, as we can all remember, set English teeth on edge. David devoured the papers day by day, and his antagonism grew, partly because, in spite of that strong gravitation of his mind towards things expansive, emotional, and rhetorical, the essential paste of him was not French but English—but mostly because of other and stronger reasons of which he was hardly conscious. During that fortnight of his agony in Paris all that sympathetic bond between the great city and himself which had been the source of so much pleasure and excitement to him during his early days with Elise had broken down. The glamour of happiness torn away, he had seen, beneath the Paris of his dream, a greedy brutal Paris from which his sick senses shrank in fear and loathing. The grace, the spell, was gone—he was alone and miserable!—and amid the gaiety, the materialism, the selfish vice of the place he had moved for days, an alien and an enemy, the love within him turning to hate.



So now his mortal pain revenged itself. They would be beaten—this depraved and enervated people!—and his feverish heart rejoiced. But Elise? His lips quivered. What did the war matter to her except so far as its inconveniences were concerned? What had *la patrie* any more than *l'amour* to do with art? He put the question to her in his wild evening walks. It angered him that as the weeks swept on, and the great thunderbolts began to fall—Wissembourg, Forbach, Wörth—his imagination would sometimes show her to him agitated and in tears. No pity for him! why this sorrow for France? Absurd! let her go paint while the world loved and fought. In '48, while monarchy and republic were wrestling it out in the streets of Paris, was not the landscape painter Chintreuil quietly sketching all the time just outside one of the gates of the city? There was the artist for you.

Meanwhile the growing excitement of the war, heightened and poisoned by this reaction of his personality, combined with his painful efforts to recover his business to make him for a time more pale and gaunt than ever. Ancrum remonstrated in vain. He would go his way.

One evening—it was the day after Wörth—he was striding blindly up the Oxford Road when he ran against a man at the corner of a side street. It was Barbier, coming out for the last news.

Barbier started, swore, caught him by the arm, then fell back in amazement.

*'C'est toi?—bon Dieu!'*

David, who had hitherto avoided his old companion with the utmost ingenuity, began hurriedly to inquire whether he was going to look at the evening's telegram.

*'Yes—no—what matter? You can tell me. David, my lad, Ancrum told me you had been ill, but——'*

The old man slipped his arm through that of the youth and looked at him fixedly. His own face was all furrowed and drawn, the eyes red.

'*Oui; tu es changé,*' he said at last with a sudden quivering breath, almost a sob, 'like everything,—like the world!'

And hanging down his head he drew the lad on, down the little street, towards his lodging.

'Come in! I'll ask no questions. Oh, come in! I have the French papers; for three hours I have been reading them alone. Come in or I shall go mad!'

And they discussed the war, the political prospect, and Barbier's French letters till nearly midnight. All the exile's nationality had revived, and so lost was he in weeping over France he had scarcely breath left wherewith to curse the Empire. In the presence of a grief so true, so poignant, wherein all the man's little tricks and absurdities had for the moment melted out of sight, David's own seared and bitter feeling could find no voice. He said not a word that could jar on his old friend. And Barbier, like a child, took his sympathy for granted and abused the 'heartless hypocritical' English press to him with a will.

The days rushed on. David read the English papers in town, then walked up late to Barbier's lodgings to read a French batch and talk. Gravelotte was over, the siege was approaching. In that strange inner life of his, David with Elise beside him looked on at the crashing trees in the Bois de Boulogne, at the long lines of carts laden with household stuff and fugitives from the *zone militaire* flocking into Paris, at the soldiers and horses camping in the Tuileries Gardens, at the distant smoke-clouds amid the woods of Issy and Meudon, as village after village flamed to ruins.

One night—it was a day or two after Sedan—in a

corner of the *Constitutionnel*, he found a little paragraph:—

‘M. Henri Regnault and M. Clairin, leaving their studio at Tangiers to the care of the French Consul, have returned to Paris to offer themselves for military service, from which, as holder of the *prix de Rome*, M. Regnault is legally exempt. To praise such an act would be to insult its authors. France—our bleeding France!—does but take stern note that her sons are faithful.’

David threw the paper down, made an excuse to Barbier, and went out. He could not talk to Barbier, to whom everything must be explained from the beginning, and his heart was full. He wandered out towards Fallowfield under a moon which gave beauty and magic even to these low, begrimed streets, these jarring, incongruous buildings, thinking of Regnault and that unforgettable night beside the Seine. The young artist’s passage through the Louvre, the towering of his great head above the crowd in the ‘Trois Rats,’ and that outburst under the moonlight—everything, every tone, every detail, returned upon him.

‘*The great France—the undying France—*’

And now for France—ah!—David divined the eagerness, the passion, with which it had been done. He was nearer to the artist than he had been two months before—nearer to all great and tragic things. His recognition of the fact had in it the start of a strange joy.

So moved was he, and in such complex ways, that as he thought of Regnault with that realising imagination which was his gift, the whole set of his feeling towards France and the war wavered and changed. The animosity, the drop of personal gall in his heart, disappeared, conjured by Regnault’s look, by Reg-

nault's act. The one heroic figure he had seen in France began now to stand to him for the nation. He walked home doing penance in his heart, passionately renewing the old love, the old homage, in this awful presence of a stricken people at bay.

And Elise came to him, in the moonlight, leaning upon him, with soft, approving eyes—

Ah! where was she—where—in this whirlwind of the national fate? where was her frail life hidden? was she still in this Paris, so soon to be 'begirt with armies'?

Four days later Barbier sent a note to Ancrum: 'Come and see me this afternoon at six o'clock. Say nothing to Grieve.'

A couple of hours afterwards Ancrum came slowly home to Birmingham Street, where he was still lodging. David had just put up the shop-shutters, John had departed, and his employer was about to retire to supper and his books in the back kitchen.

Ancrum went in and stood with his back to the fire which John had just made for the kettle and the minister's tea, when David came in with an armful of books and shut the door behind him. Ancrum let him put down his cargo, and then walked up to him.

'David,' he said, laying his hand with a timid gesture on the other's shoulder, 'Barbier has had some letters from Paris to-day—the last he will get probably—and among them a letter from his nephew.'

David started, turned sharp round, shaking off the hand.

'It contains some news which Barbier thinks you ought to know. Mademoiselle Elise Delaunay has married suddenly—married her cousin, Mr. Pimodan, a young doctor.'

The shock blanched every atom of colour from

David's face. He tried wildly to control himself, to brave it out with a desperate 'Why not?' But speech failed him. He walked over to the mantelpiece and leant against it. The room swam with him, and the only impression of which for a moment or two he was conscious was that of the cheerful singing of the kettle.

'She would not leave Paris,' said Ancrum in a low voice, standing beside him. 'People tried to persuade her—nothing would induce her. Then this young man, who is said to have been in love with her for years, urged her to marry him—to accept his protection really, in view of all that might come. Dubois thinks she refused several times, but anyway two days ago they were married, civilly, with only the legal witnesses.'

David moved about the various things on the mantelpiece with restless fingers. Then he straightened himself.

'Is that all?' he asked, looking at the minister.

'All,' said Ancrum, who had, of course, no intention of repeating any of Dubois' playful embroideries on the facts. 'You will be glad, won't you, that she should have some one to protect her in such a strait?'—he added, after a minute's pause, his eyes on the fire.

'Yes,' said the other after a moment. 'Thank you. Won't you have your tea?'

Mr. Ancrum swallowed his emotion, and they sat down to table in silence. David played with some food, took one thing up after another, laid it down, and at last sprang up and seized his hat.

'Going out again?' asked the minister, trembling, he knew not why.

The lad muttered something. Instinctively the little lame fellow, who was closest to the door, rushed to it and threw himself against it.

‘David, don’t—don’t go out alone—let me go with you!’

‘I want to go out alone,’ said David, his lips shaking. ‘Why do you interfere with me?’

‘Because——’ and the short figure drew itself up, the minister’s voice took a stern deep note, ‘because when a man has once contemplated the sin of self-murder, those about him have no right to behave as though he were still like other innocent and happy people!’

David stood silent a moment, every limb trembling. Then his mouth set, and he made a step forward, one arm raised.

‘Oh, yes!’ cried Ancrum, ‘you may fling me out of the way. My weakness and deformity are no match for you. Do, if you have the heart! Do you think I don’t know that I rescued you from despair—that I drew you out of the very jaws of death? Do you think I don’t guess that the news I have just given you withers the heart in your breast? You imagine, I suppose, that because I am deformed and a Sunday-school teacher, because I think something of religion, and can’t read your French books, that I cannot enter into what a *man* is and feels. Try me! When you were a little boy in my class, *my* life was already crushed in me—my tragedy was over. I have come close to passion and to sin; I’m not afraid of yours! You are alive here to-night, David Grieve, because I went to look for you on the mountains—lost sheep that you were—and found you, by God’s mercy. You never thanked me—I knew you couldn’t. Instead of your thanks I demand your confidence, here—now. Break down this silence between us. Tell me what you have done to bring your life to this pass. You have no father—I speak in his place, and I *deserve* that you should trust and listen to me!’

David looked at him with amazement—at the worn misshapen head thrown haughtily back—at the arms folded across the chest. Then his pride gave way, and that intolerable smart within could no longer hide itself. His soul melted within him; tears began to rain over his cheeks. He tottered to the fire and sat down, instinctively spreading his hands to the blaze, that word 'father' echoing in his ears; and by midnight Mr. Ancrum knew all the story, or as much of it as man could tell to man.

From this night of confession and of storm there emerged at least one result—the beginnings of a true and profitable bond between David and Ancrum. Hitherto there had been expenditure of interest and affection on the minister's side, and a certain responsiveness and friendly susceptibility on David's; but no true understanding and contact, mind with mind. But in these agitated hours of such talk as belongs only to the rare crises of life, not only did Ancrum gain an insight into David's inmost nature, with all its rich, unripe store of feelings and powers, deeper than any he had possessed before, but David, breaking through the crusts of association, getting beyond and beneath the Sunday-school teacher and minister, came for the first time upon the real man in his friend, apart from trappings—cast off the old sense of pupilage, and found a brother instead of a monitor.

There came a moment when Ancrum, laying his hand on David's knee, told his own story in a few bare sentences, each of them, as it were, lightning on a dark background, revealing some few things with a ghastly plainness, only to let silence and mystery close again upon the whole. And there came another moment when the little minister, carried out of himself, fell into incoherent sentences, full of obscu-

rity, yet often full of beauty, in which for the first time David came near to the living voice of religion speaking in its purest, intensest note. Christ was the burden of it all; the religion of pain, sacrifice, immortality; the religion of chastity and self-repression.

'Life goes from test to test, David; it's like any other business—the more you know the more's put on you. And this test of the man with the woman—there's no other cuts so deep. Aye, it parts the sheep from the goats. A man's failed in it—lost his footing—rolled into hell, before he knows where he is. "On this stone if a man fall"—I often put those words to it—there's all meanings in Scripture. Yes, you've stumbled, David—stumbled badly, but not more. There's mercy in it! You must rise again—you can. Accept yourself; accept the sin even; bear with yourself and go forward. That's what the Church says. Nothing can be undone, but break your pride, do penance, and all can be forgiven.

'But you don't admit the sin? A man has a right to the satisfaction of his own instincts. You asked a free consent and got it. What is law but a convention for miserable people who don't know how to love? Who was injured?

'David, that's the question of a fool. Were you and she the first man and woman in the world that ever loved? That's always the way; each man imagines the matter is still for his deciding, and he can no more decide it than he can tamper with the fact that fire burns or water drowns. All these centuries the human animal has fought with the human soul. And step by step the soul has registered her victories. She has won them only by feeling for the law and finding it—uncovering, bringing into light, the firm rocks beneath her feet. And on these rocks she rears her landmarks—marriage, the family, the State, the Church. Neglect



them, and you sink into the quagmire from which the soul of the race has been for generations struggling to save you. Dispute them! overthrow them—yes if you can! You have about as much chance with them as you have with the other facts and laws amid which you live—physical or chemical or biological.

‘I speak after the manner of men. If I were to speak after the manner of a Christian, I should say other things. I should ask how a man *dare* pluck from the Lord’s hand, for his own wild and reckless use, a soul and body for which He died; how he, the Lord’s bondsman, *dare* steal his joy, carrying it off by himself into the wilderness, like an animal his prey, instead of asking it at the hands, and under the blessing, of his Master; how he *dare*—a man under orders, and member of the Lord’s body—forget the whole in his greed for the one—eternity in his thirst for the present!

‘But no matter. Christ is nothing to you, nor Scripture, nor the Church——’

The minister broke off abruptly, his lined face working with emotion and prayer. David said nothing. In this stage of the conversation—the stage, as it were, of judgment and estimate—he could take no part. The time for it with him had not yet come. He had exhausted all his force in the attempt to explain himself—an attempt which began in fragmentary question and answer, and ended on his part in the rush of a confidence, an ‘Apologia,’ representing, in truth, that first reflex action of the mind upon experience, whence healing and spiritual growth were ultimately to issue. But for the moment he could carry the process no farther. He sat crouched over the flickering fire, saying nothing, letting Ancrum soliloquise as he pleased. His mind surged to and fro, indeed, as Ancrum talked between the poles of repulsion and response. His nature was not as Ancrum’s, and every

now and then the quick critical intellect flashed through his misery, detecting an assumption, probing an hypothesis. But in general his *feeling* gave way more and more. That moral sensitiveness in him which in its special nature was a special inheritance, the outcome of a long individualist development under the conditions of English Protestantism, made him from the first the natural prey of Ancrum's spiritual passion. As soon as a true contact between them was set up, David began to feel the religious temper and life in Ancrum draw him like a magnet. Not the forms of the thing, but the thing itself. In it, or something like it, as he listened, his heart suspected, for the first time, the only possible refuge from the agony of passion, the only possible escape from this fever of desire, jealousy, and love, in which he was consumed.

At the end he let Ancrum lead him up to bed and give him the bromide the Paris doctor had prescribed. When Ancrum softly put his head in, half an hour later, he was heavily asleep. Ancrum's face gleamed; he stole into the room carrying a rug and a pillow; and when David woke in the morning it was to see the twisted form of the little minister stretched still and soldier-like beside him on the floor.

## CHAPTER XIV

FROM that waking David rose and went about his work another man. As he moved about in the shop or in the streets, he was conscious of a gulf between his present self and his self of yesterday, which he could hardly explain. Simply the whole atmosphere and temperature of the soul was other, was different.

He could have almost supposed that some process had gone on within him during the unconsciousness of sleep, of which he was now feeling the results; which had carried him on, without his knowing it, to a point in the high road of life, far removed from that point where he had stood when his talk with Ancrum began. That world of enervating illusion, that 'kind of ghastly dreaminess,' as John Sterling called it, in which since his return he had lived with Elise, was gone, he knew not how—swept away like a cloud from the brain, a mist from the eyes. The sense of catastrophe, of things irrevocable and irreparable, the premature ageing of the whole man, remained—only the fever and the restlessness were past. Memory, indeed, was not affected. In some sort the scenes of his French experience would be throughout his life a permanent element in consciousness; but the persons concerned in them were dead—creatures of the past. He himself had been painfully re-born, and Pimodan's wife had no present personal existence for him. He turned himself deliberately to his old life, and took up the interests of it again one by one, but, as he soon discovered, with an insight, a power, a comprehension which had never yet been his. A moral and spiritual life destined to a rich development practically began for him with this winter—this awful winter of the agony of France.

His thoughts were often occupied now with Louie, but in a saner way. He could no longer, without morbidness, take on himself the whole responsibility of her miserable marriage. Human beings after all are what they make themselves. But the sense of his own share in it, and the perception of what her future life was likely to be, made him steadily accept beforehand the claims upon him which she was sure to press.

He had written to her early in September, when the

siege was imminent, offering her money to bring her to England, and the protection of his roof during the rest of the war. And by a still later post than that which brought the news of Elise's marriage arrived a scrawl from Louie, written from a country town near Toulouse, whither she and Montjoie had retreated—apparently the sculptor's native place.

The letter was full of complaints—complaints of the war, which was being mismanaged by a set of rogues and fools who deserved stringing to the nearest tree; complaints of her husband, who was a good-for-nothing brute; and complaints of her own health. She was expecting her confinement in the 'spring; if she got through it—which was not likely, considering the way in which she was treated—she should please herself about staying with such a man. *He* should not keep her for a day if she wanted to go. Meanwhile David might send her any money he could spare. There was not much of the six hundred left—that she could tell him; and she could not even screw enough for baby-clothes out of her husband. Very likely there would not be enough to pay for a nurse when her time came. Well, then she would be out of it—and a good job too.

She wished to be remembered to Dora; and Dora was especially to be told again that she needn't suppose St. Damian's was a patch on the real Catholic churches, because it wasn't. She—Louie—had been at the Midnight Mass in Toulouse Cathedral on Christmas Eve. That was something like. And down in the crypt they had a 'Bethlehem'—the sweetest thing you ever saw. There were the shepherds, and the wise men, and the angels—dolls, of course, but their dresses were splendid, and the little Jesus was dressed in white satin, embroidered with gold—*old* embroidery, tell Dora.

To this David had replied at once, sending money he could ill spare, and telling her to keep him informed of her whereabouts.

But the months passed on, and no more news arrived. He wrote again *via* Bordeaux, but with no result, and could only wait patiently till that eagle's grip, in which all French life was stifled, should be loosened.

Meanwhile his relation to another human being, whose life had been affected by the French episode, passed into a fresh phase. Two days after the news of Elise's marriage had reached him, he and John had just shut up the shop, and the young master was hanging over the counter under the gas, heavily conning a not very satisfactory business account.

John came in, took his hat and stick from a corner, and threw David a gruff 'good night.'

Something in the tone struck David's sore nerves like a blow. He turned abruptly—

'Look here, John! I can't stand this kind of thing much longer. Hadn't we better part? You've learnt a lot here, and I'll see you get a good place. You—you rub it in too long!'

John stood still, his big rough hands beginning to shake, his pink cheeks turning a painful crimson.

'You—you never said a word to me!' he flung out at last, incoherently, resentfully.

'Said a word to you? What do you mean? I told you the truth, and I would have told you more, if you hadn't turned against me as though I had been the devil himself. Do you suppose you are the only person who came to grief because of that French time? *Good God!*'

The last words came out with a low exasperation. The young man leant against the counter, looking at his assistant with bitter, indignant eyes.

John first shrank from them, then his own were drawn to meet them. Even his slow perceptions, thus challenged, realised something of the truth. He gave way—as David might have made him give way long before, if his own misery had not made him painfully avoid any fresh shock of speech.

‘Well!’ said John, slowly, with a mighty effort; ‘I’ll not lay it agen you ony more. I’ll say that. But if you want to get rid of me, you can. Only you’ll be put to ‘t wi’ t’ printing.’

The two young fellows surveyed each other. Then suddenly David said, pushing him to the door:

‘You’re a great ass, John—get out, and good night to you.’

But next day the atmosphere was cleared, and, with inexpressible relief on both sides, the two fell back into the old brotherly relation. Poor John! He kept an old photograph of Louie in a drawer at his lodging, and, when he came home to bed, would alternately weep over and denounce it. But, all the same, his interest in David’s printing ventures was growing keener and keener, and whenever business had been particularly exciting during the day, the performance with the photograph was curtailed or omitted at night. Let no scorn, however, be thought, on that account, of a true passion!—which had thriven on unkindness, and did but yield to the slow mastery of time.

The war thundered on. To Manchester, and to the cotton and silk industries of Lancashire generally, the tragedy of France meant on the whole a vast boom in trade. So many French rivals crippled—so much ground set free for English enterprise to capture—and, meanwhile, high profits for a certain number at least of Manchester and Macclesfield merchants, and brisk wages for the Lancashire operative, especially for the silk-weavers. This, with of course certain draw-

backs and exceptions, was the aspect under which the war mainly presented itself to Lancashire. Meanwhile, amid these teeming Manchester streets with their clattering luries and overflowing warehouses, there was at least one Englishman who took the war hardly, in whom the spectacle of its wreck and struggle roused a feeling which was all moral, human, disinterested.

What was Regnault doing? David kept a watch on the newspapers, of which the Free Library offered him an ample store; but there was no mention of him in the English press that he could discover, and Barbier, of course, got nothing now from Paris.

Christmas was over. The last month of the siege, that hideous January of frost and fire, rushed past, with its alternations of famine within and futile battle without—Europe looking on appalled at this starved and shivering Paris, into which the shells were raining. At last—the 27th!—the capitulation! All was over; the German was master in Europe, and France lay at the feet of her conqueror.

Out to all parts streamed the letters which had been so long delayed. Barbier and David, walking together one bitter evening towards Barbier's lodgings, silent, with hanging heads, met the postman on Barbier's steps, who held out a packet. The Frenchman took it with a cry; the two rushed upstairs and fell upon the letters and papers it contained.

There—while Barbier sat beside him, groaning over the conditions of peace, over the enthronement of the Emperor-King at Versailles, within sight of the statue of Louis Quatorze, now cursing '*ces imbéciles du gouvernement!*' and now wiping the tears from his old cheeks with a trembling hand—David read the news of the fight of Buzenval, and the death of Regnault.

It seemed to him that he had always foreseen it—

that from the very beginning Regnault's image in his thought had been haloed with a light of tragedy and storm—a light of death. His eyes devoured the long memorial article in which a friend of Regnault's had given the details of his last months of life. Barbier, absorbed in his own grief, heard not a sound from the corner where his companion sat crouched beneath the gas.

Everything—the death and the manner of it—was to him, as it were, in the natural order—fitting, right, such as might have been expected. His heart swelled to bursting as he read, but his eyes were dry.

This, briefly, was the story which he read.

Henri Regnault re-entered Paris at the beginning of September. By the beginning of October he was on active service, stationed now at Asnières, now at Colombes. In October or November he became engaged to a young girl, with whom he had been for long devotedly in love—ah! David thought of that sudden smile—the 'open door!' Their passion, cherished under the wings of war, did but give courage and heroism to both. Yet he loved most humanly! One night, in an interval of duty, on leaving the house where his *fiancée* lived, he found the shells of the bombardment falling fast in the street outside. He could not make up his mind to go—might not ruin befall the dear house with its inmates at any moment? So he wandered up and down outside for hours in the bitter night, watching, amid the rattle of the shells and the terrified cries of women and children from the houses on either side. At last, worn out and frozen with cold, but still unable to leave the spot, he knocked softly at the door he had left. The *concierge* came. 'Let me lie down awhile on your floor. Tell no one.' Then, appeased by this regained nearness to her, and by the sense that no danger could strike the one with-



out warning the other, he wrapped himself in his soldier's cloak and fell asleep.

In November he painted his last three water-colours—visions of the East, painted for her, and as flower-bright as possible, 'because flowers were scarce' in the doomed city.

December came. Regnault spent Christmas night at the advanced post of Colombes. His captain wished to make him an officer. 'Thanks, my captain,' said the young fellow of twenty-three; 'but if you have a good soldier in me, why exchange him for an indifferent officer? My example will be of more use to you than my commission.' Meanwhile the days and nights were passed in Arctic cold. Men were frozen to death round about him; his painter's hand was frostbitten. 'Oh! I can speak with authority on cold!' he wrote to his *fiancée*; 'this morning at least I know what it is to spend the night on the hard earth exposed to a glacial wind. Enough! *Je me réchaufferai à votre foyer*. I love you—I love my country—that sustains. Adieu!'

On the 17th, after a few days in Paris spent with her and some old friends, he was again ordered to the front. On Thursday the fight at Buzenval began with a brilliant success; in the middle of the day his *fiancée* still had news of him, brought by a servant. Night fell. The battle was hottest in a wood adjoining the park of Buzenval. Regnault and his painter-comrade Clairin were side by side. Suddenly the retreat was sounded, and the same instant Clairin missed his friend. He sought him with frenzy amid the trees in the darkening wood, called to him, peered into the faces of the dying—no answer! Ah! he must have been swept backwards by the rush of the retreat—Clairin will find him again.

Three days later the lost was found—one among two

hundred corpses of National Guards carted into Père Lachaise. Clairin, mad with grief, held his friend in his arms—held, kissed the beautiful head, now bruised and stained past even *her* knowing, with its bullet-wound in the temple.

On his breast was found a medal with a silver tear hanging from it. She who had long worn it as a symbol of bereavement, in memory of dear ones lost to her, had given it to him in her first joy. 'I will reclaim it,' she had said, smiling, 'the first time you make me weep!' It was all that was brought back to her—all except a scrawled paper found in his pocket, containing some hurried and almost illegible words, written perhaps beside his outpost fire.

'We have lost many men—we must remake them—*better—stronger*. The lesson should profit us. No more lingering amid facile pleasures! Who dare now live for himself alone? It has been for too long the custom with us to believe in nothing but enjoyment and all bad passions. We have prided ourselves on despising everything good and worthy. No more of such contempt!'

Then—so the story ended—four days later, on the very day of the capitulation of Paris, Regnault was carried to his last rest. A figure in widow's dress walked behind. And to many standing by, amid the muffled roll of the drums and the wailing of the music, it was as though France herself went down to burial with her son.

David got up gently and went across to Barbier, who was sitting with his letters and papers before him, staring and stupefied, the lower jaw falling, in a trance of grief.

The young man put down the newspaper he had been reading in front of the old man.

'Read that some time; it will give you something

to be proud of. I told you I knew him—he was kind to me.’

Barbier nodded, not understanding, and sought for his spectacles with shaking fingers. David quietly went out.

He walked home in a state of exaltation like a man still environed with the emotion of great poetry or great music. He said very little about Regnault in the days that followed to Ancrum or Barbier, even to Dora, with whom every week his friendship was deepening. But the memory of the dead man, as it slowly shaped itself in his brooding mind, became with him a permanent and fruitful element of thought. Very likely the Regnault whom he revered, whose name was henceforth a sacred thing to him, was only part as it were of the real Regnault. He saw the French artist with an Englishman’s eyes—interpreted him in English ways—the ways, moreover, of a consciousness self-taught and provincial, however gifted and flexible. Only one or two aspects, no doubt, of that rich, self-tormented nature, reared amid the most complex movements of European intelligence, were really plain to him. And those aspects were specially brought home to him by his own mental condition. No matter. Broadly, essentially, he understood.

But thenceforward, just as Elise Delaunay had stood to him in the beginning for French art and life, and that ferment in himself which answered to them, so now in her place stood Regnault with those stern words upon his young and dying lips—‘We have lost many men—we must remake them—*better!* Henceforward let no one dare live unto himself.’ The Englishman took them into his heart, that ethical fibre in him, which was at last roused and dominant, vibrating, responding. And as the poignant images of death and battle faded he saw his hero always as he had seen

him last—young, radiant, vigorous, pointing to the dawn behind Notre-Dame.

All life looked differently to David this winter. He saw the Manchester streets and those who lived in them with other perceptions. His old political debating interests, indeed, were comparatively slack; but persons—men and women, and their stories—for these he was instinctively on the watch. His eye noticed the faces he passed as it had never yet done—divined in them suffering, or vice, or sickness. All that he saw at this moment he saw tragically. The doors set open about him were still, as Keats, himself hurried to his end by an experience of passion, once expressed it, ‘all dark,’ and leading to darkness. There were times when Dora’s faith and Ancrum’s mysticism drew him irresistibly; other times when they were almost as repulsive to him as they had ever been, because they sounded to him like the formula of people setting out to explain the world ‘with a light heart,’ as Ollivier had gone to war.

But whether or no it could be explained, this world, he could not now help putting out his hand to meddle with and mend it; his mind fed on its incidents and conditions. The mill-girls standing on the Ancoats pavements; the drunken lurryman tottering out from the public-house to his lurry under the biting sleet of February; the ragged barefoot boys and girls swarming and festering in the slums; the young men struggling all about him for subsistence and success—these for the first time became realities to him, entered into that pondering of ‘whence and whither’ to which he had been always destined, and whereon he was now consciously started.

And as the months went on, his attention was once more painfully caught and held by Dora’s troubles

and Daddy's infirmities. For Daddy's improvement was short-lived. A bad relapse came in November; things again went downhill fast; the loan contracted in the summer had to be met, and under the pressure of it Daddy only became more helpless and disreputable week by week. And now, when Doctor Mildmay went to see him, Daddy, crouching over the fire, pretended to be deaf, and 'soft' besides. Nothing could be got out of him except certain grim hints that his house was his own till he was turned out of it. 'Looks pretty bad this time,' said the doctor to David once as he came out discomfited. 'After all, there's not much hope when the craving returns on a man of his age, especially after some years' interval.'

Daddy would sometimes talk frankly enough to David. At such times his language took an exasperating Shakespearean turn. He was abominably fond of posing as Lear or Jaques—as a man much buffeted, and acquainted with all the ugly secrets of life. Purcell stood generally for 'the enemy;' and to Purcell his half-mad fancy attributed most of his misfortunes. It was Purcell who had undermined his business, taken away his character, and driven him back to drink. David did not believe much of it, and told him so. Then, roused to wrath, the young man would speak his mind plainly as to Dora's sufferings and Dora's future. But to very little purpose.

'Aye, you're right—you're right enough,' said the old man to him on one of these occasions, with a wild, sinister look. 'Cordelia 'll hang for 't. If you want to do her any good, you must turn old Lear out—send him packing, back to the desert where he was before. There's elbow-room there!'

David looked up startled. The thin bronzed face had a restless flutter in it. Before he could reply Daddy had laid a hand on his shoulder.

‘Davy, why don’t you drink?’

‘What do you mean?’ said the young man, flushing.

‘Davy, you’ve been as close as wax; but Daddy can see a thing or two when he chooses. Ah, you should drink, my lad. Let people prate—why shouldn’t a man please himself? It’s not the beastly liquor—that’s the worst part of it—it’s the *dreams*, my lad, “the dreams that come.” They say ether does the business cheapest. A teaspoonful—and you can be alternately in Paradise and the gutter four times a day. But the fools here don’t know how to mix it.’

As he spoke the door opened, and there stood Dora on the threshold. She had just come back from a Lenten service; her little worn prayer-book was in her hand. She stood trembling, looking at them both—at David’s tight, indignant lips—at her father’s excitement.

Daddy’s eye fell on her prayer-book, and David, looking up, saw a quick cloud of distaste, aversion, pass over his weird face.

She put out some supper, and pressed David to stay. He did so in the vain hope of keeping Daddy at home. But the old vagrant was too clever for both of them. When David at last got up to go, Daddy accompanied him downstairs, and stood in the doorway looking up Market Place till David had disappeared in the darkness. Then with a soft and cunning hand he drew the door to behind him, and stood a moment lifting his face to the rack of moonlit cloud scudding across the top of the houses opposite. As he did so, he drew a long breath, with the gesture of one to whom the wild airs of that upper sky, the rush of its driving wind, were stimulus and delight. Then he put down his head and stole off to the right, towards the old White

Inn in Hanging Ditch, while Dora was still listening in misery for his return step upon the stairs.

A week later Dora, not knowing how the restaurant could be kept going any longer, and foreseeing utter bankruptcy and ruin as soon as the shutters should be up, took her courage in both hands, swallowed all pride, and walked up to Half Street to beg help of Purcell. After all he was her mother's brother. In spite of that long feud between him and Daddy, he would surely, for his own credit's sake, help them to escape a public scandal. For all his rodomontade, Daddy had never done him any real harm that she could remember.

So she opened the shop door in Half Street, quaking at the sound of the bell she set in motion, and went in.

Twenty minutes afterwards she came out again, looking from side to side like a hunted creature, her veil drawn close over her face. She fled on through Market Place, across Market Street and St. Ann's Square, and through the tall dark warehouse streets beyond—drawn blindly towards Potter Street and her only friend.

David was putting out some books on the stall when he looked up and saw her. Perceiving that she was weeping and breathless, he asked her into the back room, while John kept guard in the shop.

There she leant against the mantelpiece, shaking from head to foot, and wiping away her tears. He soon gathered that she had been to Purcell, and that Purcell had dismissed her appeal with every circumstance of cold and brutal insult. The sooner her father was in the workhouse or the lunatic asylum, and she in some nunnery or other, the sooner each would be in their right place. He was a vagabond, and she a Papist—let them go where they belonged.

He was not going to spend a farthing of his hard-earned money to help either of them to impose any further on the world. And then he let fall a word or two which showed her that he had probably been at the bottom of some merciless pressure lately applied to them by one or two of their chief creditors. The bookseller's hour was come, and he was looking on at the hewing of his Agag with the joy of the righteous. So might the Lord avenge him of all his enemies.

Dora could hardly give an account of it. The naked revelation of Purcell's hate, of so hard and vindictive a soul, had worked upon her like some physical horror. She had often suspected the truth, but now that it was past doubting, the moral shock was terrible to this tender mystical creature, whose heart by day and night lived a hidden life with the Crucified and with His saints. Oh, how could he, how could anyone, be so cruel?—her father getting an old man! and she, who had never quarrelled with him—who had nursed Lucy! So she wailed, gradually recovering her poor shaken soul—calming it, indeed, all the while out of sight, with quick piteous words of prayer and submission.

David stood by, pale with rage and sympathy. But what could he do? He was himself in the midst of a hard struggle, and had neither money nor credit available. They parted at last, with the understanding that he was to go and consult Ancrum, and that she was to go to her friends at St. Damian's.

Till now poor Dora had carefully refrained from bringing her private woes into relation with her life in and through St. Damian's. Within that enchanted circle, she was another being with another existence. There she had never asked anything for herself, except the pardon and help of God, before His altar, and through His priests. Rather she had given—given



all that she had—her time, such as she could spare from Daddy and her work, to the Sunday-school and the sick; her hard-won savings on her clothes, and on the extra work, for which she would often sit up night after night when Daddy believed her asleep, to the poor and to the services of the Church. There she had a position, almost an authority of her own—the authority which comes of self-spending. But now this innocent pride must be humbled. For the sake of her father, and of those to whom they owed money they could not pay, she must go and ask—beg instead of giving. All she wanted was time. Her embroidery work was now better paid than ever. If the restaurant were closed she could do more of it. In the end she believed she could pay everybody. But she must have time. Yes, she would go to Father Vernon that night! He would understand, even if he could not help her.

Alas! Next morning David was just going out to dinner, when a message was brought him from Market Place. He started off thither at a run, and found a white and gasping Dora wandering restlessly up and down the upper room; while Sarah, the old Lancashire cook, very red and very tearful, followed her about trying to administer consolation. Daddy had disappeared. After coming in about eleven the night before and going noisily to his room—no doubt for the purpose of deluding Dora—he must have stolen down again and made off without being either seen or heard by anybody. Even the policeman on duty in Market Place had noticed nothing. He had taken what was practically the only money left them in the world—about twenty pounds—from Dora's cashbox, and some clothes, packing these last in a knapsack which still remained to him from the foreign tramps of years before.

The efforts made by Dora, David, and Ancrum, whom David called in to help, to track the fugitive, were quite useless. Daddy had probably disguised himself, for he had all the tricks of the adventurer, and could 'make up' in former days so as to deceive even his own wife.

Strange outbreak of a secret ineradicable instinct! He had been Dora's for twenty years. But life with her at Leicester, and during their first years at Manchester, had thriven too evenly, and in the end the old wanderer had felt his blood prick within him, and the mania of his youth revive. His business had grown hateful to him; it was probably the comparative monotony of success which had first reawakened the travel-hunger—then restlessness, conflict, leading to drink, and, finally, escape.

'He will come back, you know,' said Dora one night, sharply, to David. 'He served my mother so many times. But he always came back.'

They were sitting together in the shuttered and dismantled restaurant. There was to be a sale on the premises on the morrow, and the lower room had that day been filled with all the 'plant' of the restaurant, and all or almost all the poor household stuff from upstairs. It was an odd, ramshackle collection; and poor Dora, who had been walking round looking at the auction tickets, was realising with a sinking heart how much debt the sale would still leave unprovided for. But she had found friends. Father Vernon had met the creditors for her. There had been a composition, and she had insisted upon working off to the best of her power whatever sum might remain after the possession and goodwill had been sold. She could live on a crust, and she was sure of continuous work both for the great church-furniture shop in Manchester which had hitherto employed her and also for the

newly established School of Art Needlework at Kensington. As an embroideress there were few more delicately trained eyes and defter hands than hers in England.

When she spoke of her father's coming back, David was seized with pity. She could not sit down in these days when her work was out of her hands. Perpetual movement seemed her only relief. The face, that seemed so featureless but was so expressive, had lost its sweet, shining look; the mouth had the pucker of pain; and she had piteous startled ways quite unlike her usual soft serenity.

'Oh, yes, he will come back—some time,' he said, to comfort her.

'I don't doubt that—never. But I wonder how he could go like that—how he had the heart! I did think he cared for me. I wasn't ever nasty to him—at least, I don't remember. Perhaps he thought I was. But only we two—and always together—since mother died!'

She began to tidy some of the lots, to tie some of the bundles of odds and ends together more securely—talking all the while in a broken way. She was evidently bewildered and at sea. If she could have remembered any misconduct of her own, it seemed to David, it would have been a relief to her. Her faith taught her that love was all-powerful—but it had availed her nothing!

The sale came; and the goodwill of the Parlour was sold to a man who was to make a solid success of what with Daddy had been a half-crazy experiment.

Dora went to live in Ancoats, that teeming, squalid quarter which lies but a stone's-throw from the principal thoroughfares and buildings of Manchester, and in its varieties of manufacturing life and population

presents types which are all its own. Here are the cotton operatives who work the small proportion of mills still remaining within the bounds of Manchester—the spinners, minders, reelers, reed-makers, and the rest; here are the calico-printers and dyers, the ware-housemen and lurrymen; and here too are the sellers of ‘fents,’ and all the other thousand and one small trades and occupations which live on and by the poor. The quarter has one broad thoroughfare or lung, which on a sunny day is gay, sightly, and alive; then to north and south diverge the innumerable low red-brick streets where the poor live and work; which have none, however, of the trim uniformity which belongs to the workers’ quarters of the factory towns pure and simple. Manchester in its worst streets is more squalid, more haphazard, more nakedly poor even than London. Yet, for all that, Manchester is a city with a common life, which London is not. The native Lancashire element, lost as it is beneath many supervening strata, is still there and powerful; and there are strong well-defined characteristic interests and occupations which bind the whole together.

Here Dora settled with a St. Damian’s girl friend, a shirtmaker. They lived over a sweetshop, in two tiny rooms, in a street even more miscellaneous and half-baked than its neighbours. Outside was ugliness; inside, unremitting labour. But Dora soon made herself almost happy. By various tender shifts she had saved out of the wreck in Market Place Daddy’s bits of engravings and foreign curiosities, his Swiss carvings and shells, his skins and stuffed birds; very moth-eaten and melancholy these last, but still safe. There, too, was his chair; it stood beside the fire; he had but to come back to it. Many a time in the week did she suddenly rise that she might go to the door and listen; or crane her head out of window, agitated

by a figure, a sound, as her mother had done before her.

Then her religious life was free to expand as it had never been yet. Very soon, in Passion Week, she and her friend had gathered a prayer-meeting of girls, hands from the mill at the end of the street. They came for twenty minutes in the dinner-hour, delicate-faced comely creatures many of them, with their shawls over their heads: Dora prayed and sang with them, a soft tremulous passion in every word and gesture. They thought her a saint—began to tell her their woes and their sins. In the evenings and on Sunday she lived in the coloured and scented church, with its plaintive music, its luminous altar, its suggestions both of a great encompassing church order of undefined antiquity and infinite future, and of a practical system full of support for individual weakness and guidance for the individual will. The beauty of the ceremonial appealed to those instincts in her which found other expression in her glowing embroideries; and towards the church order, with its symbols, observances, mysteries, the now solitary girl felt a more passionate adoration, a more profound humility, than ever before. Nothing too much could be asked of her. During Lent, but for the counsels of Father Russell himself, a shrewd man, well aware that St. Damian's represented the one Anglican oasis in an incorrigibly moderate Manchester, even her serviceable and elastic strength would have given way, so hard she was to that poor 'sister the body,' which so many patient ages have gone to perfect and adjust.

Half of the romance, the poetry of her life, lay here; the other half in her constant expectation of her father, and in the visits of David Grieve. Once a week at least David mounted to the little room where the two girls sat working; sometimes now, oh joy! he

went to church with her; sometimes he made her come out to Eccles, or Cheadle, or the Irwell valley for a walk. She used various maidenly arts and self-restraints to prevent scandal. At home she never saw him alone, and she now never went to Potter Street. Still, out of doors they were often alone. There was no concealment, and the persons who took notice assumed that they were keeping company and going to be married. When such things were said to Dora she met them with a sweet and quiet denial, at first blushing, then with no change at all of look or manner.

Yet the girl who lived with her knew that the first sound of David's rap on the door below sent a tremor through the figure beside her, that the slight hand would go up instinctively to the coiled hair, straightening and pinning, and that the smiling, listening, sometimes disputing Dora who talked with David Grieve was quite different from the dreamy and ascetic Dora who sat beside her all day.

Why did David go? As a matter of fact, with every month of this winter and spring, Dora's friendship became more necessary to him. All the brotherly feeling he would once so willingly have spent on Louie, he now spent on Dora. She became in truth a sister to him. He talked to her as he would have done to Louie had she been like Dora. No other relationship ever entered his mind; and he believed that he was perfectly understood and met in the same way.

Both often spoke of Lucy, towards whom David in this new and graver temper felt both kindly and gratefully. She, poor child, wrote to Dora from time to time letters full of complaints of her father and of his tyranny in keeping her away from Manchester. He indeed seemed to have taken a morbid dislike to his daughter, and what company he wanted he got from the widow, whom yet he had never made up his mind

to marry. Lucy chafed and rebelled against the perpetual obstacles he placed in the way of her returning home, but he threatened to make her earn her own living if she disobeyed him, and in the end she always submitted. She poured herself out bitterly, however, to Dora, and Dora was helplessly sorry for her, feeling that her idle wandering life with the various aunts and cousins she boarded with was excessively bad for her—seeing that Lucy was not of the stuff to fashion new duties or charities for herself out of new relations—and that the small, vain, and yet affectionate nature ran an evil chance of ultimate barrenness and sourness.

But what could she do? In every letter there was some mention of David Grieve or request for news about him. About the visit to Paris Dora had written discreetly, telling only what she knew, and nothing of what she guessed. In reality, as the winter passed on, Dora watched him more and more closely, waiting for the time when that French mystery, whatever it was, should have ceased to overshadow him, and she might once more scheme for Lucy. He must marry—that she knew!—whatever he might think. Anyone could see that, with the returning spring, in spite of her friendship and Ancrum's, he felt his loneliness almost intolerable. It was clear, too, as his manhood advanced, that he was naturally drawn to women, naturally dependent on them. In spite of his great intelligence, to her so formidable and mysterious, Dora had soon recognised, as Elise had done, the eager, clinging, confiding temper of his youth. And beneath the transformation of passion and grief it was still there—to be felt moving often like a wounded thing.

## CHAPTER XV

It was a showery April evening. But as it was also a Saturday, Manchester took no heed at all of the weather. The streets were thronged. All the markets were ablaze with light, and full of buyers. In Market Place, Dora's old home, the covered glass booths beside the pavement brought the magic of the spring into the very heart of the black and swarming town, for they were a fragrant show of daffodils, hyacinths, primroses, and palms. Their lights shone out into the rainy mist of the air, on the glistening pavements, and on the faces of the cheerful chattering crowd, to which the shawled heads so common among the women gave the characteristic Lancashire touch. Above rose the dark tower of the Exchange; on one side was the Parlour, still dedicated to the kindly diet of corn- and fruit-eating men, but repainted, and launched on a fresh career of success by Daddy's successor; on the other, the gabled and bulging mass of the old Fishing-tackle House, with a lively fish and oyster traffic surging in the little alleys on either side of it.

Market Street, too, was thronged. In the great cheap shop at the head of it, aflame with lights from top to base, you could see the buyers story after story, swarming like bees in a glass hive. Farther on in the wide space of the Infirmary square, the omnibuses gathered, and a detachment of redcoats just returned from rifle-practice on the moors crowded the pavement outside the hospital, amid an admiring escort of the youth of Manchester, while their band played lustily.

But especially in Peter Street, the street of the great public halls and principal theatres, was Manchester alive and busy. Nilsson was singing at the



'Royal,' and the rich folk were setting down there in their broughams and landaus. But in the great Free Trade Hall there was a performance of 'Judas Maccabeus' given by the Manchester Philharmonic Society, and the vast place, filled from end to end with shilling and two-shilling seats, was crowded with the 'people.' It was a purely local scene, unlike anything of the same kind in London, or any other capital. The performers on the platform were well known to Manchester, unknown elsewhere; Manchester took them at once critically and affectionately, remembering their past, looking forward to their future; the Society was one of which the town was proud; the conductor was a character, and popular; and half the audience at least was composed of the relations and friends of the chorus. Most people had a 'Susan,' an 'Alice,' or a 'William' making signs to them at intervals from the orchestra; and when anything went particularly well, and the applause was loud, the friends of Susan or Alice beamed with a proprietary pride.

Looking down upon this friendly cheerful throng sat David Grieve, high up in the balcony. It had been his wont of late to frequent these cheap concerts, where as a rule, owing to the greater musical sensitiveness of the English North as compared with the South, the music is singularly good. During the past winter, indeed, music might almost be said to have become part of his life. He had no true musical gift, but in the paralysis of many of his natural modes of expression which had overtaken him music supplied a need. In it he at least, and at this moment, found a voice and an emotion not too personal or poignant. He lost himself in it, and was soothed.

Towards the beginning of the last part he suddenly with a start recognised Lucy Purcell in the body of

the hall. She was sitting with friends whom he did not know, staring straight before her. He bent forward and looked at her carefully. In a minute or two he decided that she was looking tired, cross, and unhappy, and that she was not attending to the music at all.

So at last her father had let her come home. As to her looks, to be daughter to Purcell was to be sure of disagreeable living; and perhaps her future step-mother had been helping Purcell to annoy her.

Poor little thing! David felt a strong wish to speak to her after the performance. Meanwhile he tried to attract her attention, but in vain. It seemed to him that she looked right along the bench on which he sat; but there was no flash in her face; it remained as tired and frowning as before.

He ran downstairs before the end of the last chorus, and placed himself near the door by which he felt sure she would come out. He was just in time. She and her party also came out early before the rush. There was a sudden crowd of people in the doorway, and then he heard a little cry. Lucy stood before him, flushed, pulling at her glove, and saying something incoherent. But before he could understand she had turned back to the two women who accompanied her and spoken to them quickly; the elder replied, with a sour look at David; the younger laughed behind her muff. Lucy turned away wilfully, and at that instant the crowd from within, surging outwards, swept them away from her, and she and David found themselves together.

‘Come down those steps there, to the right,’ she said peremptorily. ‘They are going the other way.’

By this time David himself was red. She hurried him into the street, however, and then he saw that she was breathing hard, and that her hands were

clasped together as though she were trying to restrain herself.

'Oh, I am so unhappy!' she burst out, 'so unhappy! And it was all, you know, to begin with, because of you, Mr. Grieve! But oh! I forgot you'd been ill—you look so different!'

She paused suddenly, while over her face there passed an expression half startled, half shrinking, as of one who speaks familiarly, as he supposes, to an old friend and finds a stranger. She could not take her eyes off him. What was this new dignity, this indefinable change of manner?

'I am not different,' he said hastily, 'not in the least. So your father has never forgiven you the kindness you did me? I don't know what to say, Miss Lucy. I'm both sorry and ashamed.'

'Forgiven it!—no, nor ever will,' she said shortly, walking on, and forgetting everything but her woes. 'Oh, do listen! Come up Oxford Street. I must tell some one, or I shall die! I must see Dora. Father's forbidden me to go, and I haven't had a moment to myself yet. She hasn't written to me since she left the Parlour, and no one'll tell me where she is. And that *odious* woman! Oh, she is an abominable wretch! She wants to claim all my things—all the bits of things that were mother's, and I have always counted mine. She won't let me take any of them away. And she's stolen a necklace of mine—yes, Mr. Grieve, *stolen* it. I don't care *that* about it—not in itself; but to have your things taken out of your drawers without "*With your leave*" or "*By your leave*"!—She's made father worse than ever. I thought he had found her out, but he is actually going to marry her in July, and they won't let me live at home unless I make a solemn promise to "perform my religious duties" and behave properly to the chapel people. And I never

will, not if I starve for it—nasty, canting, crawling, backbiting things! Then father says I can live away, and he'll make me an allowance. And what do you think he'll allow me?'

She faced round upon him with curving lip and eyes aflame. David averred truly that he could not guess.

'Thirty—pounds—a—year!' she said with vicious emphasis. 'There—would you believe it? If you put a dirty little chit of a nurse-girl on board wages, it would come to more than that. And he just bought three houses in Millgate, and as rich as anything! Oh, it's shameful, I call it, *shameful!*'

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. Then she quickly withdrew it again and turned to him, remembering how his first aspect had surprised her. In the glare of some shops they were passing David could see her perfectly, and she him. Certainly, in the year which had elapsed since they had met she had ripened, or rather softened, into a prettier girl. Whether it was the milder Southern climate in which she had been living, or the result of physical weakness left by her attack of illness in the preceding spring, at any rate her bloom was more delicate, the lines of her small, pronounced face more finished and melting. As for her, now that she had paused a moment in her flow of complaint, she was busy puzzling out the change in him. David became vaguely conscious of it, and tried to set her off again.

'But you'd rather live away,' he said, 'when they treat you like that? You'd rather be independent, I should think? I would!'

'Oh, catch me living with that woman!' she cried passionately. 'She's no better than a thief, a common thief. I don't care who hears me. And *made up!* Oh, it's shocking! It seems to me there's nothing I can talk about at home now—whether it's getting old

—or teeth—or hair—I’m always supposed to be “passing remarks.” And I wouldn’t mind if it was my Hastings cousins I had to live with. But they can’t have me any more, and now I’m at Wakely with the Astons.’

‘The Astons?’ David echoed. Like most people of small training and intelligence, Lucy instinctively supposed that whatever was familiar to her was familiar to other people.

‘Oh, don’t you know? It’s father’s sister who married a mill-overseer at Wakely. And they’re very kind to me. Only they’re *dreadfully* pious too—not like father—I don’t mean that. And, you see—it’s Robert!’

‘Who’s Robert?’ asked David, amused by her blush, and admiring the trim lightness of her figure and walk.

‘Robert’s the eldest son. He’s a reedmaker. He’s got enough to marry on—at least he thinks so.’

‘And he wants to marry you?’

She nodded. Then she looked at him, laughing, her naturally bright eyes sparkling through the tears still wet in them.

‘Father’s a Baptist, you know—that’s bad enough—but Robert’s a *Particular* Baptist. I asked him what it meant once when he was pestering me to marry him. “Well, you see,” he said, “a man must *show* that his heart’s changed—we don’t take in everybody like—we want to be *sure* they’re real converted.” I don’t believe it does mean that—father says it doesn’t. Anyway I asked him whether if I married him he’d want me to be a Particular Baptist too. And he said, very slow and solemn, that of course he should look for religious fellowship in his wife, but that he didn’t want to hurry me. I laughed till I cried at the thought of *me* going to that hideous chapel of his, dressed like

his married sister. But sometimes, I declare, I think he'll make me do what he wants—he's got a way with him. He sticks to a thing as tight as wax, and I don't care what becomes of me sometimes.'

She pouted despondently, but her quick eye stole to her companion's face.

'Oh, no, you won't marry Robert, Miss Lucy,' said David cheerfully. 'You've had a will of your own ever since I've known you. But what are you at home for now?'

'Why, I told you—to pack up my things. But I can't find half of them; she—she's walked off with them. Oh, I'm going off again as soon as possible—I can't stand it. But I must see Dora. Father says I shan't visit Papists. But I'll watch my chance. I'll get there to-morrow—see if I don't! Tell me what she's doing, Mr. Grieve.'

David told her all he knew. Lucy's comments were very characteristic. She was equally hard on Daddy's ill-behaviour and Dora's religion, with a little self-satisfied hardness that would have provoked David but for its childish *naïveté*. Many of the things that she said of Dora, however, showed real feeling, real affection.

'She is good,' she wound up at last with a long sigh.

'Yes, she's the best woman I ever saw,' said David slowly; 'she's beautiful, she's a saint.'

Lucy looked up quickly—her dismayed eyes fastened on him—then they fell again, and her expression became suddenly piteous and humble.

'You're still getting on well, aren't you?' she said timidly. 'You were glad not to be turned out, weren't you?'

Somehow, for the life of her, she could not at that moment help reminding him of her claim upon him.

He admitted it very readily, told her broadly how he was doing and what new connections he was making. It was pleasant to tell her, pleasant to speak to this changing rose-leaf face with its eager curiosity and attention.

'And you were ill when you were abroad?—so Dora said. Father, of course, made unkind remarks—you may be sure of that!—*he'll* set stories about when he doesn't like anybody. I didn't believe a word.'

'It don't matter,' said David hotly, but he flushed. His desire to wring Purcell's neck was getting inconveniently strong.

'No, not a bit,' she declared. Then she suddenly broke into laughter. 'Oh, Mr. Grieve, how many assistants do you think father's had since you left?'

And she chattered on about these individuals, describing a series of dolts, their achievements and personalities, with a great deal of girlish fun. Her companion enjoyed her little humours and egotisms, enjoyed the walk and her companionship. After the strain of the day, a day spent either in the toil of a developing business or under a difficult pressure of thought, this light girl's voice brought a gay, relaxed note into life. The spring was in the air, and his youth stirred again in that cavern where grief had buried it.

'Oh *dear*, I must go home,' she said at last regretfully, startled by a striking clock. 'Father'll be just mad. Of course, he'll hear all about my meeting you—I don't care. I'm not going to be parted from all my friends to please him, particularly now he's turned me out for good—from Dora and——'

'From you' she would have said, but she became suddenly conscious and her voice failed.

'No, indeed! And your friends won't forget you, s Lucy. You'll go and see Dora to-morrow?'

'Yes, if I can give them the slip at home.'

There was a pause, and then he said—

'And will you allow me to visit you at Wakely some Sunday? I know those moors well.'

She reddened all over with delight. There was something in the little stiffness of the request which gave it importance.

'I wish you would; it's not far,' she stammered. 'Aunt Miriam would be glad to see you.'

They walked back rapidly along Mosley Street and into Market Place. There she stopped and shyly asked him to leave her. Almost all the Saturday-night crowd had disappeared from the streets. It was really late, and she became suddenly conscious that this walk of hers might reasonably be regarded at home as a somewhat bold proceeding.

'I wish you'd let me see you right home,' he said, detaining her hand in his.

'Oh, no, no—I shall catch it enough as it is. Oh, they'll let me in! Will it be next Sunday, Mr. Grieve?'

'No, the Sunday after. Can I do anything for you?'

He came closer to her, seeming to envelope her in his tall, protecting presence. It was impossible for him to ignore her girlish flutter, her evident joy in having seen and talked to him again, in spite of her dread of her father. Nor did he wish to ignore them. They were unexpectedly sweet to him, and he surprised himself.

'Oh no, nothing,—but it's very good of you to say so,' she said impulsively; '*very*. Good night again.'

And instinctively she put out another small hand, which also he took, so holding her prisoner a moment.

'Look here,' he said, 'I'll just slip down that side of the Close and wait till I see you get safe in. Good night; I *am* glad I saw you!'



She ran away in a blind whirl of happiness up the steps into the passage of Half Street. He slipped down to the left and waited, looking through the railings across the corner of the Close, his eyes fixed on that upper window, where he had so often sat, parleying alternately with the cathedral and Voltaire.

Lucy rang, the door opened, there were loud sounds within, but she was admitted; it closed behind her.

David was soon in his back room, kindling a lamp and a bit of fire to read by. But when it was done he sat bent forward over the blaze, till the cathedral clock chimed the small hours, thinking.

She was so unformed and childish, that poor little thing!—surely a man could make what he would of her. She would give him affection and duty; the core of the nature was sound, and her little humours would bring life into a house.

He had but to put out his hand—that was plain enough. And why not? Was any humbler draught to be for ever put aside, because the best wine had been poured to waste?

Then the rebellions of an unquenched romance, an untamed heart, beset him. Surging waves of bitterness and pain, the after-swell of that tempest in which his youth had so nearly foundered, seemed to bear him away to seas of desolation.

After all that had happened, the greed for personal joy he every now and then detected in himself surprised and angered him by its strength. The truth was that in whole tracts of his nature he was still a boy, still young beyond his years, and it was the conflict in him between youth's hot immaturity and a man's baffling experience which made the pain of his life.

He meant to go to Wakely on the next Sunday but one—that he was certain of—but as to what he was to

do and say when he got there he was perhaps culpably uncertain. But in his weakness and *sehnsucht* he dwelt upon the thought of Lucy more and more.

Then Dora—foolish saint!—came upon the scene.

Lucy found her way to the street in Ancoats where Dora lived, the morning after her talk with David, and the two cousins spent an agitated hour together. Lucy could hardly find time to ask Dora about her sorrows, so occupied was she in recounting all her own adventures. She was to go back to Wakely that very afternoon. Purcell had been absolutely unapproachable since the cousin who had escorted Lucy to the Free Trade Hall the night before had in her own defence revealed the secret of that young lady's behaviour. Pack and go she should! He wouldn't have such a hussy another night under his roof. Let them do with her as could.

'I thought he would have beaten me this morning,' Lucy candidly confessed. There was a red spot on each cheek, and she was evidently glorying in martyrdom. 'He looked like a devil—a real devil. Why can't he be fond of me, and let me alone, like other girls' fathers? I believe he *is* fond of me somehow, but he wants to break my spirit——'

She tossed her head significantly.

'Lucy, you know you ought to give in when you can,' said the perplexed Dora, with rebuke in her voice.

'Oh, nonsense!' said Lucy. 'You can't—it's ridiculous. Well, he'll quarrel with that woman some day—I'm sure *she's* his match—and then maybe he'll want me back. But perhaps he won't get me.'

Dora looked up with a curious expression, half smiling, half wistful. She had already heard all the story of the walk.

'O Dora!' cried the child, laying down her head on

the table beneath her cousin's eyes, 'Dora, I do believe he's beginning to care. You see he *asked* to come to Wakely. I didn't ask him. Oh, if it all comes to nothing again, I shall break my heart!'

Dora smoothed the fine brown hair, and said affectionate things, but vaguely, as if she was not quite certain what to say.

'He does look quite different, somehow,' continued Lucy. 'Why do you think he was so long away over there, Dora? Father says nasty things about it—says he fell into bad company and lost his money.'

'I don't know how Uncle Purcell can know,' said Dora indignantly. 'He's always thinking the worst of people. He was ill, for Mr. Ancrum told me, and he's the only person that *does* know. And anyone can see he isn't strong yet.'

'Oh, and he is so handsome!' sighed Lucy, 'handsomer than ever. There isn't a man in Manchester to touch him.'

Dora laughed out and called her a 'little silly.' But, as privately in her heart of hearts she was of the same opinion, her reproof had not much force.

When Lucy left, Dora put away her work, and, lifting a flushed face, walked to the window and stood there looking out. A pale April sun was shining on the brewery opposite, and touched the dark waters of the canal under the bridge to the left. The roofs of the squalid houses abutting on the brewery were wet with rain. Through a gap she could see a laundress's back-yard mainly filled with drying clothes, but boasting besides a couple of pink flowering currants just out, and holding their own for a few brief days against the smuts of Manchester. Here and there a man out of work lounged, pipe in mouth, at his open door, silently absorbing the sunshine and the cheerfulness of the

moist blue over the house-tops. There was a new sweetness and tenderness in the spring air—or were they in Dora's soul?

She leant her head against the window, and remained there with her hands clasped before her for some little time—for her, a most unusual idleness.

Yes, Lucy was very obstinate. Dora had never thought she would have the courage to fight her father in this way. And selfish, too. She had spoken only once of Daddy, and that in a way to make the daughter wince. But she was so young—such a child!—and would be ruined if she were left to this casual life, and people who didn't understand her. A husband to take care of her, and children—they would be the making of her.

And he! Dora's eyes filled with tears. All this winter the change in him, the silent evidences of a shock all the more tragic to her because of its mystery, had given him a kind of sacredness in her eyes. She fell thinking, besides, of the times lately he had been to church with her. Ah, she *was* glad he had heard that sermon, that beautiful sermon of Canon Welby's in Passion Week! He had said nothing about it, but she knew it had been meant for clever, educated men—men like him. The church, indeed, had been full of men—her neighbours had told her that several of the gentlemen from Owens College had been there.

That evening David knocked at the door below about half-past eight. Dora got up quickly and went across to her room-fellow, a dark-faced stooping girl, who took her shirt-maker's slavery without a murmur, and loved Dora.

'Would you mind, Mary?' she said timidly. 'I want to speak to Mr. Grieve.'

The girl looked up, understood, stopped her ma-

chine, and, hastily gathering some pieces together that wanted buttonholes, went off into the little inner room and shut the door.

Dora knelt and with restless hands put the bit of fire together. She had just thrown a handkerchief over her canaries. On the frame a piece of her work, a fine altar-cloth gleaming with golds, purples, and pale pinks, stood uncovered. The deal table, the white walls on which hung Daddy's old prints, the bare floor with its strip of carpet, were all spotlessly clean. The tea had been put away. Daddy's vacant chair stood in its place.

When David came in he found her sitting pensively on a little wooden stool by the fire. Generally he gossiped while the two girls worked busily away—sometimes he read to them. To-night as he sat down he felt something impending.

Dora talked of Lucy's visit. They agreed as to the folly and brutality of Purcell's treatment of her, and laughed together over the marauding stepmother.

Then there was a pause. Dora broke it. She was sitting upright on the stool, looking straight into his face.

'Will you not be cross if I say something?' she asked, catching her breath. 'It's not my business.'

'Say it, please.' But he reddened instantly.

'Lucy's—Lucy's—got a fancy for you,' she said tremulously, shrinking from her own words. 'Perhaps it's a shame to say it—oh, it may be! You haven't told me anything, and she's given me no leave. But she's had it a long time.'

'I don't know why you say so,' he replied half sombrely.

His flush had died away, but his hand shook on his knee.

'Oh, yes, you do,' she cried; 'you must know.'

Lucy can't keep even her own secrets. But she's got such a warm heart! I'm sure she has. If a man would take her and be kind to her, she'd make him happy.'

She stopped, looking at him intently.

Then suddenly she burst out, laying her hand on the arm of his chair—Daddy's chair:

'Don't be angry; you've been like a brother to me.'

He took her hand and pressed it, reassuring her.

'But how can I make her happy?' he said, with his head on his hand. 'I don't want to be a fool and deny what you say, for the sake of denying it. But——'

His voice sank into silence. Then, as she did not speak, he looked up at her. She was sitting, since he had released her, with her arms locked behind her, frowning in her intensity of thought, her last energy of sacrifice.

'You would make her happy,' she said slowly, 'and she'd be a loving wife. She's flighty is Lucy, but there's nothing bad in her.'

Both were silent for another minute, then, by a natural reaction, both looked at each other and laughed.

'I'm making rather free with you, I'm bound to admit that,' she said, with a merry shamefaced expression, which brought out the youth in her face.

'Well, give me time, Miss Dora. If—if anything did come of it, I should have to let Purcell know, and there'd be flat war. You've thought of that?'

Certainly, Dora had thought of it. They might have to wait, and Purcell would probably refuse to give or leave Lucy any money. All the better, according to David. Nothing would ever induce him to take a farthing of his ex-master's hoards.

But here, by a common instinct, they stopped plan-

ning, and David resolutely turned the conversation. When they parted, however, Dora was secretly eager and hopeful. It was curious how little the father's rights weighed with so scrupulous a soul. Whether it was his behaviour to her father which had roused an unconscious hardness even in her gentle nature, or whether it was the subtle influence of his Dissent, as compared with the nascent dispositions she seemed to see in David—anyway, Dora's conscience was silent; she was entirely absorbed in her own act, and in the prospects of the other two.

## CHAPTER XVI

WHEN David reached home that night he found a French letter awaiting him. It was from Louie, still dated from the country town near Toulouse, and announced the birth of her child—a daughter. The letter was scrawled apparently from her bed, and contained some passionate, abusive remarks about her husband, half finished, and hardly intelligible. She peremptorily called on David to send her some money at once. Her husband was a sot, and unfaithful to her. Even now with his first child, he had taken advantage of her being laid up to make love to other women. All the town cried shame on him. The priest visited her frequently, and was all on her side.

Then at the end she wrote a hasty description of the child. Its eyes were like his, David's, but it would have much handsomer eyelashes. It was by far the best-looking child in the place, and because everybody remarked on its likeness to her, she believed Montjoie had taken a dislike to it. She didn't care, but it made him look ridiculous. Why didn't

he do some work, instead of letting her and her child live like pigs? He could get some, if his dirty pride would let him. It wasn't to be supposed, with this disgusting Commune going on in Paris, and everybody nearly ruined, that anyone would want statues—they had never even sold the Mænad—but somebody had wanted him to do a monument, cheap, the other day for a brother who had been killed in the war; and he wouldn't. He was too fine. That was like him all over.

It was as though he could hear her flinging out the reckless sentences. But he thought there were signs that she was pleased with the baby—and he suddenly remembered her tyrannous passion for the Mason child.

As to the money, he looked carefully into his accounts. For the last six months he had been gathering every possible saving together with a view to the History of Manchester, which he and John had planned to begin printing in the coming autumn. It went against him sorely to take from such a hoard for the purpose of helping Jules Montjoie to an idler and easier existence. The fate of his six hundred pounds burnt deep into a mind which at bottom was well furnished with all the old Yorkshire and Scotch frugality.

However, he sent his sister money, and he gave up in thought that fortnight's walking tour in the Lakes he had planned for his holiday. He must just stay at home and see to business.

Then next morning, as it happened, he woke up with a sudden hunger for the country—a vision before his eyes of the wide bosom of the Scout, of fresh airs and hurrying waters, of the sheep among the heather. His night had been restless; the whole of life seemed



to be again in debate—Lucy's figure, Dora's talk, chased and tormented him. Away to the April moorland! He sprang out of bed determined to take the first train to Clough End. He had not been out of Manchester for months, and it was luckily a Saturday. Here was this letter of Louie's too—he owed the news to Uncle Reuben. Since Reuben's visit to Manchester, a year before, there had been no communication between him and them. Six years! How would the farm—how would Aunt Hannah look? There was a drawing in him this morning towards the past, towards even the harsh forms and memories of it, such as often marks a time of emotion and crisis, the moment before a man takes a half-reluctant step towards a doubtful future.

But as he journeyed towards the Derbyshire border, he was not in truth thinking of Dora's counsels or of Lucy Purcell at all. Every now and then he lost himself in the mere intoxication of the spring, in the charm of the factory valleys, just flushing into green, through which the train was speeding. But in general his attention was held by the book in his hand. His time for reading had been much curtailed of late by the toils of his business. He caught covetously at every spare hour.

The book was Bishop Berkeley's 'Dialogues.'

With what a medley of thoughts and interests had he been concerned during the last four or five months! His old tastes and passions had revived as we have seen, but unequally, with morbid gaps and exceptions. In these days he had hardly opened a poet or a novelist. His whole being shrank from them, as though it had been one wound, and the books which had been to him the passionate friends of his most golden hours, which had moulded in him, as it were, the soul where-with he had loved Elise, looked to him now like

enemies as he passed them quickly by upon the shelves.

But some of his old studies—German, Greek, science especially—were the saving of him. Among some foreign books, for instance, which he had ordered for a customer he came upon a copy of some scientific essays by Littré. Among them was a survey of the state of astronomical knowledge written somewhere about 1835, with all the luminous charm which the great Positivist had at command. David was captured by it, by the flight of the scientific imagination through time and space, amid suns, planets and nebulae, the beginnings and the wrecks of worlds. When he laid it down with a sigh of pleasure, Ancrum, who was sitting opposite, looked up.

‘You like your book, Davy?’

‘Yes,’ said the other slowly, staring out of the twilight window at the gloom which passes for sky in Manchester. Then with another long breath,—‘It makes you a new heaven and a new earth!’

A similar impression, only even richer and more detailed, had been left upon him by a volume of Huxley’s ‘Lay Sermons.’ The world of natural fact in its overpowering wealth and mystery was thus given back to him, as it were, under another aspect than that torturing, intoxicating aspect of art—one that fortified and calmed. All his scientific curiosities which had been so long laid to sleep revived. His first returning joy came from a sense of the inexhaustibleness and infinity of nature.

But very soon this renewed interest in science began to have the bearing and to issue in the mental activities which, all unknown to himself, had been from the beginning in his destiny. He could not now read it for itself alone. That new ethical and spiritual susceptibility, into which agony and loss had become

slowly transformed, dominated and absorbed all else. For some time, beside his scientific books, there lay others from a class not hitherto very congenial to him, that which contains the great examples in our day, outside the poets, of the poetical or imaginative treatment of ethics—Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin. At an age when most young minds of intelligence amongst us are first seized by these English masters, he had been wandering in French paths. ‘Sartor Resartus,’ Emerson’s ‘Essays,’ ‘The Seven Lamps,’ came to him now with an indescribable freshness and force. Nay, a too great force! We enjoy the great prophets of literature most when we have not yet lived enough to realise all they tell us. When David, wandering at night with Teufelsdröckh through heaven and hell, felt at last the hard sobs rising in his throat, he suddenly put the book and others akin to it away from him. As with the poets so here. He must turn to something less eloquent—to paths of thought where truth shone with a drier and a calmer light.

But still the same problems! Since his Eden gates had closed upon him, he had been in the outer desert where man has wandered from the beginning, threatened with all the familiar phantoms, illusions, mist-voices of human thought. What was consciousness—knowledge—law? Was there any law—any knowledge—any *I*?

Naturally he had long ceased to find any final sustenance or pleasure in the Secularist literature, which had once convinced him so easily. Secularism up to a certain point, it began to seem to him, was a commonplace; beyond that point, a contradiction. If the race should ever take the counsel of the Secularists, or of that larger Positivist thought, of which English secularism is the popular reflection, the human intellect would be a poorer instrument with a narrower

swing. So much was plain to him. For nothing can be more certain than that some of the finest powers and noblest work of the human mind have been developed by the struggle to know what the Secularist declares is neither knowable nor worth knowing.

Yet the histories of philosophy which he began to turn over were in truth no more fruitful to him than the talk of the *Reasoner*. They stimulated his powers of apprehension and analysis; and the great march of human debate from century to century touched his imagination. But in these summaries of the philosophical field his inmost life appropriated nothing. Once by a sort of reaction he fell upon Hume again, pining for the old intellectual clearness of impression, though it were a clearness of limit and negation. But he had hardly begun the 'Treatise' or the 'Essays' before his soul rose against them, crying for he knew not what, only that it was for nothing they could give.

Then by chance a little Life of Berkeley, and upon it an old edition of the works, fell into his hands. As he was turning over the leaves, the 'Alciphron' so struck him that he turned to the first page of the first volume, and evening after evening read the whole through with a devouring energy that never flagged. When it was over he was a different being. The mind had crystallised afresh.

It was his first serious grapple with the fundamental problems of knowledge. And, to a nature which had been so tossed and bruised in the great unregarding tide of things, which had felt itself the mere chattel of a callous universe, of no account or dignity either to gods or men, what strange exaltation there was in the general *suggestion* of Berkeley's thought! The mind, the source of all that is; the impressions on the senses, merely the speech of the Eternal Mind to ours, a Visual Language, whereof

man's understanding is perpetually advancing, which has been indeed contrived for his education; man, naturally immortal, king of himself and of the senses, inalienably one—if he would but open his eyes and see—with all that is Divine, true, eternal: the soul that had been crushed by grief and self-contempt revived at the mere touch of these vast possibilities like a trampled plant. Not that it absorbed them yet, made them its own; but they made a healing stimulating atmosphere in which it seemed once more possible for it to grow into a true manhood. The spiritual hypothesis of things was for the first time presented in such a way as to take imaginative hold without exciting or harrowing the feelings; he saw the world reversed, in a pure light of thought, as Berkeley saw it, and all the horizon of things fell back.

Now—on this April afternoon—as the neighbourhood of Manchester was left behind, as the long wood-clad valleys and unpolluted streams began to prophesy of Derbyshire and the Peak, David, his face pressed against the window, fell into a dream with Berkeley and with nature. Oh for knowledge! for verification! He began dimly and passionately to see before him a life devoted to thought—a life in which science after science should become the docile instrument of a mind still pressing on and on into the shadowy realm, till, in Berkeley's language, the darkness part, and it 'recover the lost region of light'!

But in the very midst of this overwhelming vision he said suddenly to himself:

'There is another way—another answer—Dora's way and Ancrum's.'

Aye, the way of faith which asks for no length of years in which to win the goal, which is there at once—in the beat of a wing—safe on the breast of God!

He thought of it as he had seen it illustrated in his friend and in Dora, with the mixture of attraction and repulsion which, in this connection, was now more or less habitual to him. The more he saw of Dora, the more he wondered—at her goodness and her ignorance. Her positive dislike to, and alienation from knowledge was amazing. At the first indication of certain currents of thought he could see her soul shrivelling and shrinking like a green leaf near flame. As he had gradually realised, she had with some difficulty forgiven him the attempt to cure Daddy's drinking through a doctor; that anyone should think sin could be reached by medicine—it was in effect to throw doubt on the necessity of God's grace! And she could not bear that he should give her information from the books he read about the Bible or early Christianity. His detached, though never hostile, tone was clearly intolerable to her. She could not and would not suffer it, would take any means of escaping it.

Then that Passion-week sermon she had taken him to hear; which had so moved her, with which she had so sweetly and persistently assumed his sympathy! The preacher had been a High Church Canon with a considerable reputation for eloquence. The one o'clock service had been crowded with business and professional men. David had never witnessed a more tempting opportunity. But how hollow and empty the whole result! What foolish sentimental emphasis, what unreality, what contempt for knowledge, yet what a show of it!—an elegant worthless jumble of Gibbon, Horace, St. Augustine, Wesley, Newman and Mill, mixed with the cheap picturesque—with moonlight on the Campagna, and sunset on Niagara—and leading, by the loosest rhetoric, to the most confident conclusions. He had the taste of it in his mouth still. Fresh from the wrestle of mind into which Berkeley

had led him, he fell into a new and young indignation with sermon and preacher.

Yet, all the same, if you asked how man could best *live*, apart from thinking how the soul could put its foot on the brute—where would Dora stand then? What if the true key to life lay not in knowledge, but in *will*? What if knowledge in the true sense was ultimately impossible to man, and if Christianity not only offered, but could give him the one thing truly needful—his own will, regenerate?

But with the first sight of the Clough End streets these high debates were shaken from the mind.

He ran up the Kinder road, with its villanous paving of cobbles and coal dust, its mills to the right, down below in the hollow, skirting the course of the river, and its rows of workmen's homes to the left climbing the hill—in a tremor of excitement. Six years! Would anyone recognise him? Ah! there was Jerry's 'public,' an evil-looking weather-stained hole; but another name swung on the sign; poor Jerry!—was he, too, gone the way of orthodox and sceptic alike? And here was the Foundry—David could hardly prevent himself from marching into the yard littered with mysterious odds and ends of old iron which had been the treasure house of his childhood. But no Tom—and no familiar face anywhere.

Yes!—there was the shoemaker's cottage, where the prayer-meeting had been, and there, on the threshold, looking at the approaching figure, stood the shoemaker's wife, the strange woman with the mystical eyes. David greeted her as he came near. She stared at him from under a bony hand put up against the sun, but did not apparently recognise him; he, seized with sudden shyness, quickened his pace, and was soon out of her sight.

In a minute or two he was at the Dye-works, which mark the limit of the town, and the opening of the valley road. Every breath now was delight. The steep wooded hills to the left, the red-brown shoulder of the Scout in front, were still wrapt in torn and floating shreds of mist. But the sun was everywhere—above in the slowly triumphing blue, in the mist itself, and below, on the river and the fields. The great wood climbing to his left was all embroidered on the brown with palms and catkins, or broken with patches of greening larch, which had a faintly luminous relief amid the rest. And the dash of the river—and the scents of the fields! He leapt the wall of the lane, and ran down to the water's edge, watching a dipper among the stones in a passion of pleasure which had no words.

Then up and on again, through the rough uneven lane, higher and higher into the breast of the Scout. What if he met Jim Wigson on the way? What if Aunt Hannah, still unreconciled, turned him from the door? No matter! Rancour and grief have no hold on mortals walking in such an April world—in such an exquisite and sunlit beauty. On! let thought and nature be enough! Why complicate and cumber life with relations that do but give a foothold to pain, and offer less than they threaten?

There is smoke rising from Wigson's, and figures moving in the yard. Caution!—keep close under the wall. And here at last is Needham Farm, at the top of its own steep pitch, with the sycamore trees in the lane beside it, the Red Brook sweeping round it to the right, the rough gate below, the purple Scout mist-wreathed behind. There are cows lowing in the yard, a horse grazes in the front field; through the little garden gate a gleam of sun strikes on the struggling crocuses and daffodils which come up year after



year, no man heeding them; there is a clucking of hens, a hurry of water, a flood of song from a lark poised above the field. The blue smoke rises into the misty air; the sun and the spring caress the rugged lonely place.

With a beating heart David opened the gate into the field, walked round the little garden, let himself into the yard, and with a hasty glance at the windows mounted the steps and knocked.

No answer. He knocked again. Surely Aunt Hannah must be about somewhere. Eleven o'clock; how quiet the house was!

This time there was a clatter of a chair on a flagged floor inside, and a person with a slow laboured step came and opened.

It was Reuben. He adjusted his spectacles with difficulty, and stared at the intruder.

'Uncle Reuben!—I thought it was such a fine day, I'd just run over and see the old place, and bring you some news,' said David, smiling and holding out his hand.

Reuben took it, stupefied. 'Davy,' he said, trembling. Then with a sudden movement he whipped the door to behind him, and shut it close.

'Whist!' he said, putting his old finger to his lip. 'T' servant's just settlin her i' th' kitchen. She's noa ready yet—she's been terr'ble bad th' neet. Coom yo here.' And he descended the steps with infinite care, and led David to the wood-shed.

'Is Aunt Hannah ill?' asked David, astonished.

Reuben leant against the wall of the shed, and took off his spectacles, as though to wipe them with his old and shaking hands. Then David saw a sort of convulsion pass across his ungainly face.

'Aye,' he said, looking down, 'aye, she's broken is Hannah. Yo didna know?'

'I've heard nothing.'

Reuben recounted the facts. Since her stroke of last spring, and the partial recovery which had followed upon it, there had been little apparent change, except perhaps in the direction of slowly increasing weakness. She was a wreck, and likely to remain so. Hardly anybody but Reuben could understand her now, and she rarely let him out of her sight. He could not get time to attend to the farm, was obliged to leave things to the hired man, and was in trouble often about his affairs.

'Bit yo see, she hasna t' reet use of her speäch,' he said, excusing himself humbly to his handsome city nephew. 'An' she conno gie ower snipin aw at onst. 'Twudna be human natur'. An' t' gell's worritin' an' I mun tell her what t' missis says.'

David asked if he might see her, or should he just turn back to the town? Reuben protested, his hospitality and family feeling aroused, his poor mind torn with conflicting motives.

'I believe she'd fratch if she didna see tha,' he said at last. 'A'll just goo ben, and ask.'

He went in, and David remained in the wood-shed, staring out at the familiar scene, at Louie's window, at the steps where he and she had fed the fowls together.

The door opened again, and Reuben reappeared on the steps, agitated and beckoning.

David went in, stepping softly, holding his blue cloth cap in his hand. In another instant he stood beside the old cushioned seat in the kitchen, looking down at Hannah.

This Hannah! this his childhood's enemy! this shawled and shrunken figure with the white parchment face and lantern cheeks!

He stooped to her and said something about why he had come. Reuben listened wondering.

'Louie's married and got a babby—dosto hear, Hannah? And he'—t' lad—did yo iver see sich a yan for growin?'

He wished to be mildly jocular. Hannah's face did not move. She had just touched her nephew with her cold wasted hand. Now she beckoned to him to sit down at her right. He did so, and then for the first time he could believe that Hannah, the old Hannah, was there beside them. For as she slowly studied his dress, the Inverness cape then as now a favourite garb in Manchester, the hand holding the cap, refined since she saw it last by commerce with books and pens rather than hurdles and sheep, the broad shoulders, the dark head, her eye for the first time met his, full, and a weird thrill went through him. For that eye—dulled, and wavering—was still Hannah. The old hate was in it, the old grudge, all that had been at least for him and Louie the inmost and characteristic soul of their tyrant. He knew in an instant that she had in her mind the money of which he and his sister had robbed her, and beyond that the offences of their childhood, the infamy of their mother. If she could, she would have hurled them all upon him. As it was, she was silent, but that brooding eye, like a smouldering spark in her blanched face, spoke for her.

Reuben tried to talk. But a weight lay on him and David. The gaunt head in the coarse white nightcap turned now to one, now to the other, pursued them phantom-like. Presently he insisted that his nephew must dine, avoiding Hannah's look. David would much rather have gone without; but Reuben, affecting joviality, called the servant, and some food was brought. No attempt was made to include Hannah in the meal. David supposed that it was now necessary to feed her.

Reuben talked disjointedly of the neighbours and his stock, and asked a few questions, without listening to the answers, about David's affairs, and Louie's marriage. In Hannah's presence his poor dull wits were not his own; he could in truth think of nothing but her.

After the meal, however, when a draught of ale had put some heart in him, he got up with an air of resolution.

'I mun goo and see what that felly's been doin' wi' th' Huddersfield beëasts,' he said; 'wilta coom wi' me, Davy? Mary!'

He called the little maid. Hannah suddenly said something incoherent which David could not understand. Reuben affected not to hear.

'Mary, gie your mistress her dinner, like a good gell. An' keep t' house-door open, soa at she can knock wi' t' stick if she wants owt.'

He stood before her restless and ashamed, afraid to look at her. Then he suddenly stooped and kissed her on the forehead. David felt a lump in his throat. As he took leave of her the spell, as it were, of Reuben's piteous affection came upon him. He saw nothing but a dying and emaciated woman, and taking her hand in his, he said some kind natural words.

The hand dropped from his like a stone. As he stood at the door behind Reuben, the servant came forward with a plate of something which she put down inside the fender. As she did so, she awkwardly upset the fire-irons, which fell with a crash. Hannah started upright in her chair, with a rush of half-articulate words, grasping fiercely for her stick with glaring eyes. The servant, a wild moorland lass, fled terrified, and at the 'house' door turned and made a face at David.

Outside Reuben slowly mastered himself, and woke up to some real interest in Louie's doings. David told him her story frankly, so far as it could be separated from his own, and, pressed by Reuben's questions, even revealed at last the matter of the six hundred pounds. Reuben could not get over it. Sandy's 'six hunderd pund' which he had earned with the sweat of his brow, all handed over to that minx Louie, and wasted by her and a rascally French husband in a few months—it was more than he could bear.

'Aye, aye, marryin's varra weel,' he said impatiently. 'A grant tha it's a great sin coomin thegither without marryin. But Sandy's six hunderd pund! Noa, I conno abide sich wark.'

And he fell into sombre silence, out of which David could hardly rouse him. Except that he said once, 'And we that had kep' it so long. I'd better never ha gien it tha.' And clearly that was the bitter thought in his mind. The sacrifice that had taxed all his moral power, and, as he believed, brought physical ruin on Hannah, had been for nothing, or worse than nothing. Neither he nor David nor anyone was the better for it.

'I must go over the shoulder to Frimley,' said David at last. They had made a half-hearted inspection of the stock in the home fields, and were now passing through the gate on to the moor. 'I must see Margaret Dawson again before I take the train back.'

Reuben looked astonished and shook his head as though he did not remember anything about Margaret Dawson. He walked on beside his nephew for a while in silence. The Red Brook was leaping and dancing beside them, the mountain ashes were just bursting into leaf, the old Smithy was ahead of them on the heathery slope, and to their left the Downfall, full and white, thundered over its yellow rocks.

But they had hardly crossed the Red Brook to mount the peak beyond when Reuben drew up.

'Noa'—he said restlessly—'noa. I mun goo back. T' gell's flighty and theer's aw maks o' mischief i' yoong things.' He stood and held his nephew by the hand, looking at him long and wistfully. As he did so a calmer expression stole for an instant into the poor troubled eyes.

'Very like a'st not see tha again, Davie. We niver know. Livin's hard soomtimes—soa's deein, folks say. I'm often fret't of deein'—but I should na be. Theer's noan so mich peace here, and we *know* that wi' the Lord theer's peace.'

He gave a long sigh—all his character was in it—so tortured was it and hesitating.

They parted, and the young man climbed the hill, looking back often to watch the bent figure on the lower path. The spell had somehow vanished from the sunshine, the thrill from the moorland air. Life was once more cruel, implacable.

He walked fast to Frimley, and made for the cottage of Margaret's brother. He remembered its position of old.

A woman was washing in the 'house' or outer kitchen. She received him graciously. The weekly money which in one way or another he had never failed to pay since he first undertook it, had made him well known to her and her husband. With a temper quite unlike that of the characteristic northerner, she showed no squeamishness at all about the matter. If it hadn't been for his help, they would just have sent Margaret to the workhouse, she said bluntly; for they had many mouths to feed, and couldn't have burdened themselves with an extra one. She was quite 'silly' and often troublesome.

'Is she here?' David asked.

'Aye, if yo goo ben, yo'll find her,' said the woman, carelessly pointing to an inner door. 'I conno ha her in here washin days, nor the children noather.'

David opened the door pointed out to him. He found himself in a rough weaving shed almost filled by a large hand-loom, with its forest of woodwork rising to the ceiling, its rolls of perforated pattern-paper, its great cylinders below, and many-coloured shuttles to either hand. But to-day it stood idle, the weaver was not at work. The room was stuffy but cold, and inexpressibly gloomy in this silence of the loom.

Where was Margaret? After a minute's search, there, beyond the loom, sitting by a fireless grate, was a little figure in a bedgown and nightcap, poking with a stick amid the embers, and as it seemed crooning to itself.

David made his way up to her, inexpressibly moved. 'Margaret!'

She did not know him in the least. She had a starved-looking cat on her lap, which she was huddling against her breast. The face had fallen away almost to nothing, so small and thin it was. She was dirty and unkempt. Her still brown hair, once so daintily neat, straggled out beneath her torn cap; her print bedgown was pinned across her, her linsey skirt was in holes; everywhere the same tale of age neglected and unloved.

When David first stood before her she drew back with a terrified look, still clutching the cat tightly. But, as he smiled at her, with the tears in his eyes, speaking her name tenderly, her frightened look relaxed, and she remained staring at him with the shrinking furtive expression of a quite young child.

He knelt down beside her.

'Margaret—dear Margaret—don't you know me?' She did not answer, but her wrinkled eyes, still blue

and vaguely sweet, wavered under his, and it seemed to him that every now and then a shiver of cold ran through her old and frail body. He went on gently, trying to recall her wandering senses. In vain. In the middle she interrupted him with a piteous lip.

'They promised me a ribbon for't,' she said, complainingly, in a hoarse, bronchitic voice, pointing to the animal she held, and to its lean neck adorned with a collar of plaited string, on which apparently she had just been busy, to judge from the odds and ends of string lying about.

At the same moment David became aware of a couple of children craning their heads round the corner of the loom to look, a loutish boy about eleven, and a girl rather younger. At sight of them, Margaret raised a cry of distress and alarm, with that helpless indefinable note in the voice which shows that personality, in the true sense, is no longer there.

'Go away!' David commanded.

The children did not stir, but grinned. He made a threatening movement. Then the boy, as quick as lightning, put his tongue out at Margaret, and caught hold of his sister, and they clattered off, their mother in the next room scolding them out into the street again.

And this the end of a creature all sacrifice, a life all affection!

He took her shivering hand in his.

'Margaret, listen to me. You shall be better looked after. I will see to that. No one shall be unkind to you any more. If they won't do it here, my—my—wife shall take care of you!'

He lifted her hand and kissed it, putting all the pity and bitter indignation of his heart into the action. Margaret, seeing his emotion, whimpered too; otherwise she was impassive.

He left her, went into the next room, and had a



long energetic talk with Margaret's sister-in-law. The woman, half ashamed, half recalcitrant, in the end promised amendment. What business it was of his she could not imagine; but the small weekly addition which he offered to make to Margaret's payments, while it showed him a greater fool than before, made it impossible to put his meddling aside. She promised that Margaret should be brought into the warm, that she should have better clothes, and that the children should be kept from plaguing her.

Then he departed, and mounting the moor again, spent an hour or two wandering among the boggy fissures of the top, or sitting on the high edges of the heather, looking down over the dark and craggy splendour of the hill immediately around and beneath him, on and away through innumerable paling shades of distance to the blue Welsh border. His speculative fervour was all gone. Reuben, Hannah, Margaret, these figures of suffering and pain had brought him close to earth again. The longing for a human hand in his, for a home, wife, children to spend himself upon, to put at least for a while between him and this unconquerable 'something which infects the world,' became in this long afternoon a physical pain not to be resisted. He thought more and more steadily of Lucy, schooling himself, idealising her.

It was the Sunday before Whitsunday. David was standing outside a trim six-roomed house in the upper part of the little Lancashire town of Wakely, waiting for Lucy Purcell.

She came at last, flushed and discomposed, pulling the door hastily to behind her.

They walked on a short distance, talking disconnectedly of the weather, the mud, and the way on to the moor, till she said suddenly:

'I wish people wouldn't be so good and so troublesome!'

'Did Robert wish to keep you at home?' inquired David, laughing.

'Well, he didn't want me to come out with—anybody but him,' she said, flushing. 'And it's so bad, because one can't be cross. I don't know how it is, but they're just the best people here that ever walked!'

She looked up at him seriously, an unusual energy in her slight face.

'What!—a town of saints?' asked David, mocking. It was so difficult to take Lucy seriously.

She tossed her head and insisted.

Talking very fast, and not very consecutively, she gave him an account, so far as she was able, of the life lived in this little town, a typical Lancashire town of the smaller and more homogeneous kind. All the people worked in two large spinning mills, or in a few smaller factories representing dependent industries, such as reed-making. Their work was pleasant to them. Lucy complained, with the natural resentment of the idle who see their place in the world jeopardised by the superfluous energy of the workers, that she could never get the mill girls to say that the mill hours were too long. The heat tried them, made appetites delicate, and lung mischief common. But the only thing which really troubled them was 'half-time.' Socially everybody knew everybody. They were passionately interested in each other's lives and in the town's affairs. And their religion, of a strong Protestant type expressed in various forms of Dissent, formed an ideal bond which kept the little society together, and made an authority which all acknowledged, an atmosphere in which all moved.

The picture she drew was, in truth, the picture of one of those social facts on which perhaps the future

of England depends. She drew it girlishly, quite unconscious of its large bearings, gossiping about this person and that, with a free expenditure of very dogmatic opinion on the habits and ways which were not hers. But, on the whole, the picture emerged, and David had never liked her talk so well. The little self-centred thing had somehow been made to wonder and admire; which is much for all of us.

And she, meanwhile, was instantly sensible that she was in a happy vein, that she pleased. Her eyes danced under her pretty spring hat. How proud she was to walk with him—that he had come all this way to see her! As she shyly glanced him up and down, she would have liked the village street to be full of gazers, and was almost loth to leave the public way for the loneliness of the moor. What other girl in Wakely had the prospect of such a young man to take her out? Oh! would he ever, ever ‘ask her’—would he even come again?

At last, after a steep and muddy climb, through uninviting back ways, they were out upon the moor. An apology for a moor in David’s eyes! For the hills which surround the valley of the Irwell, in which Wakely lies, are, for the most part, green and rolling ground, heatherless and cragless. Still, from the top they looked over a wide and wind-blown scene, the bolder moors of Rochdale behind them, and in front the long green basin in which the Irwell rises. Along the valley bottoms lay the mills, with their surrounding rows of small stone houses. Up on the backs of the moors crouched the old farms, which have watched the mills come, and will perhaps see them go; and here and there a grim-looking colliery marked a fold of the hill. The landscape on a spring day has a bracing bareness, which is not without exhilaration. The wind blows freshly, the sun lies broadly on the

hills. England, on the whole at her busiest and best, spreads before you.

They were still on the top when it occurred to them that they had a long walk in prospect—for they talked of getting to the source of the Irwell—and that it was dinner-time. So they sat down under one of the mortarless stone walls which streak the moors, and David brought out the meal that was in his pockets. They ate with laughter and chat. Pigeons passed overhead, going and coming from an old farm about a hundred yards away; the sky above them had a lark for voice singing his loudest; and in the next field a peewit was wheeling and crying. The few trees in sight were struggling fast into leaf. Nature even in this cold north was gay to-day and young.

Suddenly, in the midst of their meal, by a natural caprice and reaction of the mind, as David sat looking down on slate roofs and bare winding valley, across the pale, rain-beaten grass of the moor, all the northern English detail vanished from his eyes. For one suffocating instant he saw nothing but a great picture gallery, its dimly storied walls and polished floor receding into the distance. In front Velazquez' 'Infanta,' and before it, a figure bent over a canvas. Every line and tint stood out. He heard the light varying voice, caught the complex grace of the woman, the strenuous effort of the artist.

Enough! He closed his eyes for one bitter instant; then raised them again to England and to Lucy.

There under the wall, while they were still lingering in the sun, he asked Lucy Purcell to be his wife. And Lucy, hardly believing her own foolish ears, and in a whirl of bliss and exultation past expression, nevertheless put on a few maidenly airs and graces, coquetted a little, would not be kissed all at once, talked of her father and the war that must be faced,

and finally surrendered, held up her scarlet cheek for her lord's caress, and then sat speechless, hand in hand with him.

But Nature had its way. They rambled on, crossing the stone stiles which link the bare green fields on the side of the moor. When a stile appeared, Lucy would send him on in front, so that she might mount decorously, and then descend trembling upon his hand.

Presently they came to a spot where the path crossed a little streamlet, and then climbed a few rough steps in a steep bank, and so across a stile at the top.

David ran up, leapt the stile, and waited. But he had time to study the distant course of their walk, as well as the burnt and lime-strewn grass about him, for no Lucy appeared. He leant over the wall, and to his amazement saw her sitting on one of the stone steps below, crying.

He was beside her in an instant. But he could not loosen the hands clasped over her eyes.

'Oh, why did you do it?—why did you do it? I'm not good enough—I never shall be good enough!'

For the first time since their formal kiss he put his arms round her. And as she, at last forced to look up, found herself close to the face which, in its dark refinement and power, seemed to her to-day so far, so wildly above her deserts, she saw it all quivering and changed. Never had little Lucy risen to such a moment; never again, perhaps, could she so rise. But in that instant of passionate humility she had dropped healing and life into a human heart.

Yet, was it Lucy he kissed?—Lucy he gathered in his arms? Or was it not rather Love itself?—the love he had sought, had missed, but must still seek—and seek?

**BOOK IV**  
**MATURITY**



## CHAPTER I

'DADDY!' said a little voice.

The owner of it, a child of four, had pushed open a glass door, and was craning his curly head through it towards a garden that lay beyond.

'Yes, you rascal, what do you want now?'

'Daddy, come here!'

The voice had a certain quick stealthiness, through which, however, a little tremor of apprehension might be detected.

David Grieve, who was smoking and reading in the garden, came up to where his small son stood, and surveyed him.

'Sandy, you've been getting into mischief.'

The child laid hold of his father, dragged him into the little hall, and towards the dining-room door. Arrived there, he stopped, put a finger to his lip, and laid his head plaintively on one side.

'Zere's an awful sight in zere, Daddy.'

'You monkey, what have you been up to?'

David opened the door. Sandy first hung back, then, in a sudden enthusiasm, ran in, and pointed a thumb pink with much sucking at the still uncleared dinner table, which David and the child's mother had left half an hour before.

'Zere's a pie!' he said, exultantly.

And a pie there was. First, all the salt-cellars had been upset into the middle of the table, then the bits of



bread left beside the plates had been crumbled in, then—the joys of wickedness growing—the mustard-pot had been emptied over the heap, some bananas had been stuck unsteadily here and there to give it feature, and finally, in a last orgie of crime, a cruets of vinegar had been discharged on the whole, and the brown streams were now meandering across the clean tablecloth.

‘Sandy, you little wretch!’ cried his father, ‘don’t you know that you have been told again and again not to touch the things on the table? Hold out your hand!’

Sandy held out a small paw, whimpered beforehand, but never ceased all the time to watch his father with eyes which seemed to be quietly on the watch for experiences.

David administered two smart pats, then rang the bell for the housemaid. Sandy stationed himself on the rug opposite his father, and looked at his reddened hand, considering.

‘I don’t seem to mind much, Daddy!’ he said at last, looking up.

‘No, sir. Daddy’ll have to try and find something that you *will* mind.’

The tone was severe, and David did his best to frown. In reality his eyes, under the frown, devoured his small son, and he had some difficulty in restraining himself from kissing the hand he had just slapped.

When the housemaid entered, however, she showed a temper which would clearly have slapped Master Sandy without the smallest compunction.

The little fellow stood and listened to her laments and denunciations with the same grave considering eyes, slipped his hand inside his father’s for protection, watched, like one enchained, the gradual demolition of the pie, and when it was all gone, and the tablecloth removed, he gave a long sigh of relief.

'Say you're sorry, sir, to Jane, for giving her so much extra trouble,' commanded his father.

'I'm soddy, Jane,' said the child, nodding to her; 'but it was a p—*wecious* pie, wasn't it?'

The mixture of humour and candour in his baby eye was irresistible. Even Jane laughed, and David took him up and swung him on to his shoulder.

'Come out, young man, into the garden, where I can keep an eye on you. Oh! by the way, are you all right again?'

This inquiry was uttered as they reached the garden seat, and David perched the child on his knee.

'Yes, I'm *bet*—ter,' said the child slowly, evidently unwilling to relinquish the dignity of illness all in a moment.

'Well, what was the matter with you that you gave poor mammy such a bad night?'

The child was silent a moment, pondering how to express himself.

'I was—I was a little sick outside, and a little *feelish* inside'—he wavered on the difficult word. 'Mammy said I had the wrong dinner yesterday at Aunt Dora's. Zere was plums—*lots* o' plums!' said the child, clasping his hands on his knee, and hunching himself up in a sudden ecstasy.

'Well, don't go and have the wrong dinner again at Aunt Dora's. I must tell her to give you nothing but rice pudding.'

'Zen I shan't go zere any more,' said the child, with determination.

'What, you love plums more than Aunt Dora?'

'No—o,' said Sandy dubiously, 'but plums *is* good!'

And, with a sigh of reminiscence, he threw himself back in his father's arm, being, in fact, tired after his bad night and the further excitement of the 'pie.'

The thumb slipped into the pink mouth, and with the other hand the child began dreamily to pull at one of his fair curls. The attitude meant going to sleep, and David had, in fact, hardly settled him, and drawn a light overcoat which lay near over his small legs, before the fringed eyelids sank.

David held him tenderly, delighting in the weight, the warmth, the soft even breath of his sleeping son. He managed somehow to relight his pipe, and then sat on, dreamily content, enjoying the warm September sunshine, and letting the book he had brought out lie unopened.

The garden in which he sat was an oblong piece of ground, with a central grass plat and some starved and meagre borders on either hand. The gravel in the paths had blackened, so had the leaves of the privets and the lilacs, so also had the red brick walls of the low homely house closing up the other end of the garden. Seventy years ago this house had stood pleasantly amid fields on the northern side of Manchester; its shrubs had been luxuriant, its roses unstained. Now on every side new houses in oblong gardens had sprung up, and the hideous smoke plague of Manchester had descended on the whole district, withering and destroying.

Yet David had a great affection for his house, and it deserved it. It had been built in the days when there was more elbow-room in the world than now. The three sitting-rooms on the ground floor opened sociably into each other, and were pleasantly spacious, and the one story of bedrooms above contained, at any rate in the eyes of the tenants of the house, a surprising amount of accommodation. When all was said, however, it remained, no doubt, a very modest dwelling, at a rent of somewhere about ninety pounds a year; but as David sat contemplating it this after-

noon, there rose in him again the astonishment with which he had first entered upon it, astonishment that he, David Grieve, should ever have been able to attain to it.

‘Sandy! come here directly! Where are you, sir?’

David heard the voice calling in the hall, and raised his own.

‘Lucy! all right!—he’s here.’

The glass door opened, and Lucy came out. She was very smartly arrayed in a new blue dress which she had donned since dinner; yet her looks were cross and tired.

‘Oh, David, how stupid! Why isn’t the child dressed? Just look what an object! I sent Lizzie for him ten minutes ago, and she couldn’t find him.’

‘Then Lizzie has even less brains than I supposed,’ said David composedly, ‘seeing that she had only to look out of a back window. What are you going to do with him?’

‘Take him out with me, of course. There are the Watsons of Fallowfield, they pestered me to bring him, and they’re at home Saturdays. And aren’t you coming too?’

‘Madam, you are unreasonable!’ said David, smiling, and putting down his pipe, he laid an affectionate hand on his wife’s arm. ‘I went careering about the world with you last Saturday and the Saturday before, and this week end I must take for reading. There is an Oxford man who has been writing me infuriated letters this week because I won’t let him know whether we will take up his pamphlet or no. I must get that read, and a good many other things, before to-morrow night.’

‘Oh, I know!’ said Lucy, pettishly. ‘There’s always something in the way of what I want. Soon I shan’t see anything of you at all; it will be all business, and

yet not a penny more to spend! Well, then, give me Sandy.'

David hesitated.

'Do you think you'll take him?' he said, bending over the little fellow. 'He doesn't look a bit himself to-day. It's those abominable plums of Dora's!'

He spoke with fierceness, as though Dora had been the veriest criminal.

'Well, but what nonsense!' cried Lucy; 'they don't upset other children. I can't think what's wrong with him.'

'He isn't like other children; he's of a finer make,' said David, laughing at his own folly, but more than half sincere in it all the same.

Lucy laughed too, and was appeased. She bent down to look at him, confessed that he was pale, and that she had better not take him lest there should be catastrophes.

'Well, then, I must go alone,' she said, turning away discontentedly. 'I don't know what's the good of it. Nobody cares to see me without him or you.'

The last sentence came out with a sudden energy, and as she looked back towards him he saw that her cheek was flushed.

'What, in that new gown?' he said, smiling, and looked her up and down approvingly.

Her expression brightened.

'Do you like it?' she said, more graciously.

'Very much. You look as young as when I first teased you! Come here and let me give you a "nip for new."'

She came docilely. He pretended to pinch the thin wrist she held out to him, and then, stooping, lightly kissed it.

'Now go and enjoy yourself,' he said, 'and I'll take

care of Sandy. Don't tire yourself. Take a cab when you want one.'

She was moving away when a thought struck her.

'What are you going to say to Lord Driffield?'

A cloud crossed David's look. 'Well, what am I to say to him? You don't really want to go, Lucy?'

In an instant the angry look came back.

'Oh, very well!' she cried. 'If you're ashamed of me, and don't care to take me about with you, just say it, that's all!'

'As if I wanted to go myself!' he remonstrated. 'Why, I should be bored to death; so would you. I don't believe there would be a person in the house whom either of us would ever have seen before, except Lord Driffield. And I can see Lord Driffield, and his books too, in much more comfortable ways than by going to stay with him.'

Lucy stood silent a moment, trying to contain herself, then she broke out:

'That is just like you!' she said in a low bitter voice; 'you won't take any chance of getting on. It's always the way. People say to me that you're so clever—that you're thought so much of in Manchester, you might be anything you like. And what's the good?—that's what I think! If you do earn more money you won't let us live any differently. It's always, can't we do without this? and can't we do without that? And as to knowing people, you won't take any trouble at all! Why can't we get on, and make new friends, and be—be—as good as anybody? other people do. I believe you think I should disgrace myself—I should put my knife in my mouth, or something, if you took me to Lord Driffield's. I can behave myself *perfectly*, thank you.'

And Lucy looked at her husband in a perfect storm of temper and resentment. Her prettiness had lost

much of its first bloom; the cheek-bones, always too high, were now more prominent than in first youth, and the whole face had a restless thinness which robbed it of charm, save at certain rare moments of unusual moral or physical well-being. David, meeting his wife's sparkling eyes, felt a pang compounded of many mixed compunctions and misgivings.

'Look here, Lucy!' he said, laying down his pipe, and stretching out his free hand to her, 'don't say those things. They hurt me, and you don't mean them. Come and sit down a moment, and let's make up our minds about Lord Driffield.'

Unwillingly she let herself be drawn down beside him on the garden bench. These quarrels and reproaches were becoming a necessity and a pleasure to her. David felt, with a secret dread, that the habit of them had been growing upon her.

'I haven't done so very badly for you, have I?' he said, affectionately, as she sat down, taking her two gloved hands in his one.

Lucy vehemently drew them away.

'Oh, if you mean to say,' she cried, her eyes flaming, 'that I had no money, and ought just to be thankful for what I can get, just *say it*, that's all!'

This time David flushed.

'I think, perhaps, you'd better go and pay your calls,' he said, after a minute; 'we can talk about this letter some other time.'

Lucy sat silent, her chest heaving. As soon as ever in these little scenes between them he began to show resentment, she began to give way.

'I didn't mean that,' she said, uncertainly, in a low voice, looking ready to cry.

'Well, then, suppose you don't say it,' replied David, after a pause. 'If you'll try and believe it, Lucy, I don't want to go to Lord Driffield's simply

and solely because I am sure we should neither of us enjoy it. Lady Driffield is a stuck-up sort of person, who only cares about her own set and relations. We should be patronised, we should find it difficult to be ourselves—there would be no profit for anybody. Lord Driffield would be too busy to look after us; besides, he has more power anywhere than in his own house.'

'No one could patronise you,' said Lucy, firing up again.

'I don't know,' said David with a smile and a stretch; 'I'm shy—on other people's domains. If they'd come here I should know how to deal with them.'

Lucy was silent for a while, twisting her mouth discontentedly. David observed her. Suddenly he held out his hand to her again, relenting.

'Do you really want to go so much, Lucy?'

'Of course I do,' she said, pouting, in a quick injured tone. 'It's—it's a chance, and I want to see what it's like; and I should hardly have to buy anything new, unless it's a new bonnet, and I can make that myself.'

David sat considering.

'Well!' he said at last, trying to stifle his sigh, 'I don't mind. I'll write and accept.'

Lucy's eye gleamed. She edged closer to her husband.

'You won't mind very much? It's only two nights. Isn't Sandy cramping your arm?'

'Oh, we shall get through, I dare say. No—the boy's all right. I *say*'—with a groan—'shall I have to get a new dress suit?'

'Yes, of *course*,' said Lucy, with indignant eagerness.

'Well then, if you don't go off, and let me earn



some money, we shall be in the Bankruptcy Court. Good-bye! I shall take the boy into the study, and cover him up while I work.'

Lucy stood before him an instant, then stooped and kissed him on the forehead. She would have liked to say a penitent word or two, but there was still something hard and hot in her heart which prevented her. Yet her husband, as he sat there, seemed to her the handsomest and most desirable of men.

David nodded to her kindly, and sat watching her slim straight figure as she tripped away from him across the garden and disappeared into the house. Then he bent over Sandy and raised him in his arms.

'Don't wake, Sandy!' he said softly, as the little man half opened his eyes—'Daddy's going to put you to bye in the study.'

And he carried him in, the child breathing heavily against his shoulder, and deposited his bundle on an old horsehair sofa in the corner of his own room, turning the little face away from the light, and wrapping up the bare legs.

Then he sat down to his work. The room in which he sat was made for work. It was walled with plain deal bookcases, which were filled from floor to ceiling, largely with foreign books, as the paper covers testified.

For the rest, anyone looking round would have noticed a spacious writing-table in the window, a large and battered armchair beside the fire, a photograph of Lucy over the mantelpiece, oddly flanked by an engraving of Goethe and the head of the German historian Ranke, a folding cane chair which was generally used by Lucy whenever she visited the room, and the horsehair sofa, whereon Sandy was now sleeping amid a surrounding litter of books and papers which only just left room for his small person. If there were

other chairs and tables, they were covered deep in literature of one kind or another, and did not count. The large window looked on the garden, and the room opened at the back into the drawing-room, and at one side into the dining-room. On the rug slept the short-haired black collie, whom David had once protected from Louie's dislike—old, blind, and decrepit, but still beloved, especially by Sandy, and still capable of barking a toothless defiance at the outer world.

It was a room to charm a student's eyes, especially on this September afternoon with its veiled and sleepy sun stealing in from the garden, and David fell into his chair, refilled his pipe, and stretched out his hand for a batch of manuscript which lay on his table, with an unconscious sigh of satisfaction.

The manuscript represented a pamphlet on certain trade questions by a young Oxford economist. For the firm of Grieve & Co., of Manchester, had made itself widely known for some five years past to the intelligence of northern England by its large and increasing trade in pamphlets of a political, social, or economical kind. They supplied mechanics' institutes, political associations, and workmen's clubs; nay, more, they had a system of hawkers of their own, which bade fair to extend largely. To be taken up by Grieve & Co. was already an object to young politicians, inventors, or social reformers, who might wish for one reason or another to bring their names or their ideas before the working-class of the North. And Grieve & Co. meant David, sitting smoking and reading in his armchair.

He gave the production now in his hands some careful reading for half an hour or more, then he suddenly threw it down.

'Stuff and nonsense!' he said to himself. 'The man has got the facts about those Oldham mills wrong

somehow, I'm certain of it. Where's that letter I had last week?' and, jumping up, he took a bunch of keys out of his pocket and opened a drawer in his writing-table. The drawer contained mostly bundles of letters, and to the right hand a number of loose ones recently received, and not yet sorted or tied. He looked through these, found what he wanted, and was about to close the drawer when his attention was caught by a thick black note-book lying towards the back of it. He took it out, reminded by it of something he had meant to do, and carried it off with the Oldham letter to his chair. Once settled there again, he turned himself to the confutation of his pamphleteer. But not for long. The black book on his knee exercised a disturbing influence; his under-mind began to occupy itself with it, and at last the Oldham letter was hastily put down, and, taking out a pocket pen, David, with a smile at his own delinquency, opened the black book, turned over many closely written pages, and settled down to write another.

The black book was his journal. He had kept it intermittently since his marriage, rather as a journal of thought than as a journal of events, and he had to add to it to-day some criticisms of a recent book by Renan which had been simmering in his mind for a week or two. Still it contained a certain number of records of events, and, taken generally, its entries formed an epitome of everything of most import—practical, moral, or intellectual—which had entered into David Grieve's life during the eight years since his marriage.

For instance:—

*'April 10, 1876.—Our son was born this morning between three and four o'clock, after more than three years of marriage, when both of us had begun to*

despair a little. Now that he is come, I am decidedly interested in him, but the paternal relation hardly begins at birth, as the mother's does. The father, who has suffered nothing, cannot shut his eyes to the physical ugliness and weakness, the clash of pain and effort, in which the future man begins; the mother, who has suffered everything, seems by a special spell of nature to feel nothing after the birth but the mystery and wonder of the *new creature*, the life born from her life—flesh of her flesh—breath of her breath. Else why is Lucy—who bears pain hardly, and had looked forward much less eagerly to the child, I think, than I had—so proud and content just to lie with the hungry creature beside her? while I am half inclined to say, What! so little for so much?—and to spend so full an energy in resenting the pains of maternity as an unmeaning blot on the scheme of things, that I have none left for a more genial emotion. Altogether, I am disappointed in myself as a father. I seem to have no imagination, and at present I would rather touch a loaded torpedo than my son.'

'*April 30.*—Lucy wishes to have the child christened at St. Damian's, and, though it goes against me, I have made no objection. And if she wishes it I shall go. It is not a question of one's own personal consistency or sincerity. The new individuality seems to me to have a claim in the matter, which I have no business to override because I happen to think in this way or that. My son when he grows up may be an ardent Christian. Then, if I had failed to comply with the national religious requirement, and had let him go unbaptised, because of my own beliefs or non-beliefs, he might, I think, rightly reproach me: "I was helpless, and you took advantage."

'Education is different. The duty of the parent to

hand on what is best and truest in his own mind to the child is clear. Besides, the child goes on to carry what has been taught him into the open *agora* of the world's thought, and may there test its value as he pleases. But the omission, in a sense irreparable, of a definite and customary act like baptism from a child's existence, when hereafter the omission may cause him a pang quite disproportionate to any likes or dislikes of mine in the matter, appears to me unjust.

'I talk as if Lucy were not concerned!—or Dora! In reality I shall do as Lucy wills. Only they must not misunderstand me for the future. If my son lives, his father will not hide his heart from him.

'I notice for the first time that Lucy is anxious and troubled about *her* father. She would like now to be friends, and she took care that the news of the child's birth should be conveyed to him at once through a common acquaintance. But he has taken no notice. In some natures the seeds of affection seem to fall only on the sand and rock of the heart, where because they have "no depth of earth they wither away;" while the seeds of hatred find the rich and good ground, where they spring and grow a hundred-fold.'

'December 8, 1877.—I have just been watching Sandy on the rug between the two dogs—Tim, and the most adorable black and tan *dachshund* that Lord Driffield has just given me. Sandy had a bit of biscuit, and was teasing his friends—first thrusting it under their noses, and then, just as they were preparing to gulp, drawing it back with a squeal of joy. The child's evident mastery and sense of humour, the grave puzzled faces of the dogs, delighted me. Then a whim seized me. I knelt down on the rug, and asked him to give me some. He held out the biscuit

and laid it against my lips; I saw his eye waver; there was a gleam of mischief—the biscuit was half snatched away, and I felt absurdly chagrined. But in an instant the little face melted into the sweetest, keenest smile, and he almost choked me in his eagerness to thrust the biscuit down my throat. “Poor Daddy! Daddy so hungry.”

‘I recall with difficulty that I once thought him ugly and unattractive, poor little worm! On the contrary, it is quite clear that, whatever he may be when he grows up—I don’t altogether trust his nose and mouth—for a child he is a beauty! His great brown eyes—so dark and noticeable beneath the fair hair in the little apple-blossom face—let you into the very heart of him. It is by no means a heart of unmixed goodness. There is a curious aloofness in his look sometimes, as of some pure intelligence beholding good and evil with the same even speculative mind. But this strange mood breaks up so humanly! he has such wiles—such soft wet kisses! such a little flute of a voice when he wants to coax or propitiate you!’

‘*March 1878.*—My printing business has been growing very largely lately. I have now worked out my profit-sharing scheme with some minuteness, and yesterday the men, John, and I had a conference. In part, my plan is copied from that of the “Maison Leclaire,” but I have worked a good deal of my own into it. Our English experience of this form of industrial partnership has been on the whole unfavourable; but, after a period of lassitude, experiments are beginning to revive. The great rock ahead lies in one’s relation to the trade unions—one must remember that.

‘To the practised eye the men to-day showed signs of accepting it with cordiality, but the north-country man is before all things cautious, and I dare say a

stranger would have thought them cool and suspicious. We meet again next week.

‘I must explain the thing to Lucy—it is her right. She may resent it vehemently, as she did my refusal, in the autumn, to take advantage of that London opening. It will, of course, restrict our income just as it was beginning to expand quickly. I have left myself adequate superintendence wages, a bonus on these wages calculated in the same way as that of the men, a fixed percentage on the capital already employed in the business, and a nominal thirty per cent. of the profits. But I can see plainly that however the business extends, we—she and I—shall never “make our fortune” out of it. For beyond the fifty per cent. of the profits to be employed in bonuses on wages, and the twenty per cent. set aside for the benefit and pension society, my thirty per cent. must provide me with what I want for various purposes connected with the well-being of the workers, and for the widening of our operations on the publishing side, in a more or less propagandist spirit.

‘My bookselling business proper is, of course, at present outside the scheme, and I do not see very well how anything of the kind can be applied to it. This will be a comfort to Lucy; and just now the trade both in old and foreign books is prosperous and brings me in large returns. But I cannot disguise from myself that the other experiment is likely to absorb more and more of my energies in the future. I have from sixty to eighty men now in the printing-office—a good set, take them altogether. They have been gradually learning to understand me and my projects. The story of what Leclair was able to do for the lives and characters of his men is wonderful!

‘My poor little wife! I try to explain these things to her, but she thinks that I am merely making mad

experiments with money, teaching workmen to be "uppish" and setting employers against me. When in my turn I do my best to get at what she means by "getting on," I find it comes to a bigger house, more servants, a carriage, dinner parties, and, generally, a move to London, bringing with it a totally new circle of acquaintance who need never know exactly what she or I rose from. She does not put all this into words, but I think I have given it accurately.

'And I should yield a great deal more than I do if I had any conviction that these things, when got, would make her happy. But every increase in our scale of living since we began has seemed rather to make her restless, and fill her with cravings which yet she can never satisfy. In reality she lives by her affections, as most women do. One day she wants to lose sight of everyone who knew her as Purcell's daughter, or me as Purcell's assistant; the next she is fretting to be reconciled to her father. In the same way, she thinks I am hard about money; she sees no attraction in the things which fill me with enthusiasm; but at the same time, if I were dragged into a life where I was morally starved and discontented, she would suffer too. No, I must steer through—judge for her and myself—and make life as pleasant to her in little ways as it can be made.

'Ah! the gospel of "getting on"—it fills me with a kind of rage. There is an essential truth in it, no doubt, and if I had not been carried away by it at one time, I should have far less power over circumstances than I now have. But to square the whole of this mysterious complex life to it—to drop into the grave at last, having missed, because of it, all that sheds dignity and poetry on the human lot, all that makes it worth while or sane to hope in a destiny for man diviner and more lasting than appears—horrible!



'Yet Lucy may rightly complain of me. I get dreamy—I procrastinate. And it is unjust to expect that her ideal of social pleasure should be the same as mine. I ought to—and I will—make more effort to please her.'

'*July 1878.*—I am in Paris again. Yesterday afternoon I wandered about looking at those wrecks of the Commune which yet remain. The new Hôtel de Ville is rising, but the Tuileries still stands charred and ruined against the sky, an object lesson for Belleville. I walked up to the Arc de l'Étoile, and coming back I strolled into a little leafy open-air restaurant for a cup of coffee. Suddenly I recognised the place—the fountain—a large quicksilver ball—a little wooden pavilion festooned with coloured lamps. It was as though eight years were wiped away.

'I could not stay there. But the shock soon subsided. There is something bewildering, de-personalising, in the difference between one stage of life and another. In certain moods I feel scarcely a thread of identity between my present self and myself of eight years ago.

'This morning I have seen Louie, after an interval of three years. Montjoie keeps out of my way, and, as a matter of fact, I have never set eyes on him since I passed him close to the Auteuil station in July 1870. From Louie's account, he is now a confirmed drunkard, and can hardly ever be got to do any serious work. Yet she brought me a clay study of their little girl which he threw off in a lucid interval two or three months ago, surely as good as anybody or anything, astonishingly delicate and true. Just now, apparently, he has a bad fit on, and but for my allowance to her she tells me they would be all but destitute. It is remarkable to see how she has taken possession of this

money and with what shrewdness she manages it. I suspect her of certain small Bourse speculations—she has all the financial slang on the tip of her tongue—but if so, they succeed. For she keeps herself and the child, scornfully allows him so much for his pocket in the week, and even, as I judge from the consideration she enjoys in the church she frequents, finds money for her own Catholic purposes.

‘Louie a fervent Catholic and an affectionate mother! The mixture of old and new in her—the fresh habits of growth imposed on the original plant—startle me at every turn. Her Catholicism, which resolves itself, perhaps, into the cult of a particular church and of two or three admirable and sagacious priests, seems to me one long intrigue of a comparatively harmless kind. It provides her with enemies, allies, plots, battles, and surprises. It ministers, too, to her love of colour and magnificence—a love which implies an artistic sense, and would have been utilised young if she had belonged to an artistic family.

‘But just as I am adapting myself to the new Louie the old reappears! She was talking to me yesterday of her exertions at Easter for the Easter decorations, and describing to me in superlatives the final splendour of the results, and the compliments which had been paid her by one or two of the clergy, when the name of a lady who seems to have been connected with the church longer than Louie has, and is evidently her rival in various matters of pious service and charitable organisation, came to her lips. Instantly her face flamed, and the denunciation she launched was quite in the old Clough End and Manchester vein. I was to understand that this person was a mean, designing, worthless creature, a hideous object besides, and “made up;” and as to her endeav-

ours to ingratiate herself with Father this and Father that, the worst motives were hinted at.

‘Another little incident struck me more painfully still. Her devotion to the little Cécile is astonishing. She is miserable when the child has a finger-ache, and seems to spend most of her time in dressing and showing her off. Yet I suspect she is often irritable and passionate even with Cécile; the child has a shrinking quiet way with her which is not natural. And to-day, when she was in the middle of cataloguing Montjoie’s enormities, and I was trying to restrain her, remembering that Cécile was looking at a book on the other side of the room, she suddenly called to the child imperiously:

“Cécile! come here and tell your uncle what your father is!”

‘And, to my horror, the little creature walked across to us, and, as though she were saying a lesson, began to *débiter* a set speech about her father’s crimes and her mother’s wrongs, containing the wildest abuse of her father, and prompted throughout by the excited and scarlet Louie. I tried to stop it; but Louie only pushed me away. The child rose to her part, became perfectly white, declaimed with a shrill fury, indescribably repulsive, and at the end sank into a chair, hardly able to stand. Then Louie covered her with kisses, made me get wine for her, and held her cradled in her arms till it was time for them to go.

‘On the way downstairs, when Cécile was in front of us, I spoke my mind about this performance in the strongest way. But Louie only laughed at me. “It shall be quite plain that she is *mine* and not his! I don’t run away from him; I keep him from dying on the streets like a dog; but his child and everyone else shall know what he is.”

‘It is a tigress passion. Poor little child!—a thin,

brown, large-eyed creature, with rather old, affected manners, and a small clinging hand.'

'*July 4th.*—Father Lenoir, Louie's director, has just been to call upon me; Louie insisted on my going to a festival service at St. Eulalie this morning, and introduced me to him—an elderly, courteous, noble-faced priest of a fine type. He was discreet, of course, and made me feel the enormous difference that exists between an outsider and a member of the one flock. But I gathered that the people among whom she is now thrown perfectly understand Louie. By means of the subtle and powerful discipline of the Church, a discipline which has absorbed the practical wisdom of generations, they have established a hold upon her. And they work on her also through the child. But he gave me to understand that there had been crises; that the opportunities for and temptations to dissolute living which beset Montjoie's wife were endless; and it was a marvel that under such circumstances a being so wild had yet kept straight.

'I shook him warmly by the hand at parting, and thanked him from my heart. He somewhat resented my thanks, I thought. They imported, perhaps, a personal element into what he regards as a matter of pure ecclesiastical practice and duty.'

'*December 25th, 1878.*—Lucy is still asleep; the rest of the house is just stirring. I am in my study looking out on the snowy garden and the frosted trees, which are as yet fair and white, though in a few hours the breath of Manchester will have polluted them.

'Last night I went with Lucy and Dora to the midnight service at St. Damian's. It pleased them that I went; and I thought the service, with its bells, its resonant *Adeste fideles*, and its white flowers, singu-

larly beautiful and touching. And yet, in truth, I was only happy in it because I was so far removed from it; because the legend of Bethlehem and the mythology of the Trinity are no longer matters of particular interest or debate with me; because after a period of three-fourths assent, followed by one lasting over years of critical analysis and controversial reading, I have passed of late into a conception of Christianity far more positive, fruitful, and human than I have yet held. I would fain believe it the Christianity of the future. But the individual must beware lest he wrap his personal thinking in phrases too large for it.

‘Yet, at least, one may say that it is a conception which has been gaining more and more hold on the minds of those who during the present century have thought most deeply, and laboured most disinterestedly in the field of Christian antiquity—who have sought with most learning and with fewest hindrances from circumstance to understand Christianity, whether as a history or as a philosophy.

‘I have read much German during the past year, and of late a book reviewing the whole course of religious thought in Germany since Schleiermacher, with a mixture of exhaustive information and brilliant style most unusual in a German, has absorbed all my spare hours. Such a movement!—such a wealth of collective labour and individual genius thrown into it—producing offshoots and echoes throughout the world, transforming opinion with the slow inevitableness which belongs to all science, possessing already a great past and sure of a great future.

‘In the face of it, our orthodox public, the contented ignorance of our clergy, the solemn assurance of our religious press—what curious and amazing phenomena! Yet probably the two worlds have their ana-

logues in every religion; and what the individual has to learn in these days at once of outward debate and of unifying social aspiration, is "to dissent no longer with the heat of a narrow antipathy, but with the quiet of a large sympathy."

## CHAPTER II

A FEW days after Lord Driffield's warm invitation to Mr. and Mrs. David Grieve to spend an October Saturday-to-Monday at Benet's Park had been accepted, Lucy was sitting in the September dusk putting some frills into Sandy's Sunday coat, when the door opened and Dora walked in.

'You do look done!' said Lucy, as she held up her cheek to her cousin's salutation. 'What have you been about?'

'They kept me late at the shop, for a Saturday,' said Dora, with a sigh of fatigue, 'and since then I've been decorating. It's the Dedication Festival to-morrow.'

'Well, the festivals don't do *you* any good,' said Lucy, emphatically; 'they always tire you to death. When you do get to church, I don't believe you can enjoy anything. Why don't you let other people have a turn now, after all these years? There's Miss Barham, and Charlotte Corfield, and Mrs. Willan—they'd all do a great deal more if you didn't do so much. I know that.'

Lucy's cool bright eye meant, indeed, that she had heard some remarks made of late with regard to Dora's position at St. Damian's somewhat unfavourable to her cousin. It was said that she was jealous of co-operation or interference on the part of new mem-

bers of the congregation in the various tasks she had been accustomed for years past to lay upon herself in connection with the church. She was universally held to be extraordinarily good; but both in the large shop, where she was now forewoman, and at St. Damian's, people were rather afraid of her, and inclined to head oppositions to her. A certain severity had grown upon her; she was more self-confident, though it was a self-confidence grounded always on the authority of the Church; and some parts of the nature which at twenty had been still soft and plastic were now tending to rigidity.

At Lucy's words she flushed a little.

'How can they know as well as I what has to be done?' she said with energy. 'The chancel screen is *beautiful*, Lucy—all yellow fern and heather. You must go to-morrow, and take Sandy.'

As she spoke she threw off her waterproof and unloosed the strings of her black bonnet. Her dark serge dress with its white turn-down collar and armlets—worn these last for the sake of her embroidery work—gave her a dedicated, conventual look. She was paler than of old; the eyes, though beautiful and luminous, were no longer young, and lines were fast deepening in the cheeks and chin, with their round childish moulding. What had been *naïveté* and tremulous sweetness at twenty, was now conscious strength and patience. The countenance had been fashioned—and fashioned nobly—by life; but the tool had cut deep, and had not spared the first grace of the woman in developing the saint. The hands especially, the long thin hands defaced by the labour of years, which met yours in a grasp so full of purpose and feeling, told a story and symbolised a character.

'David won't come,' said Lucy, in answer to Dora's last remark; 'he hardly ever goes anywhere now unless

he hears of some one going to preach that he thinks he'll like.'

'No—I know,' said Dora. A shade came over her face. The attitude of David Grieve towards religion during the last four or five years represented to her the deep disappointment of certain eager hopes, perhaps one might almost call them ambitions, of her missionary youth. The disappointment had brought a certain bitterness with it, though for long years she had been sister and closest friend to both David and his wife. And it had made her doubly sensitive with regard to Lucy, whom she had herself brought over from the Baptist communion to the Church, and Sandy, who was her godchild.

After a pause, she hesitatingly brought a small paper book out of the handbag she carried.

'I brought you this, Lucy. Father Russell sent it you. He thinks it the best beginning book you can have. He always gives it in the parish; and if the mothers will only use it, it makes it so much easier to teach the children when they come to Sunday school.'

Lucy took it doubtfully. It was called 'The Mother's Catechism;' and, opening it, she saw that it contained a series of questions and answers, as between a mother and a child.

'I don't think Sandy would understand it,' she said, slowly, as she turned it over.

'Oh yes, he would!' said Dora, eagerly. 'Why, he's nearly five, Lucy. It's really time you began to teach him something—unless you want him to grow up a little heathen!'

The last words had a note of indignation. Lucy took no notice. She was still turning over the book.

'And I don't think David will like it,' she said, still more slowly than before.

Dora flushed.



'He can't want to keep Sandy from being taught any religion at all! It wouldn't be fair to you—or to the child. And if he won't do it, if he isn't certain enough about what he thinks, how can he mind your doing it?'

'I don't know,' said Lucy, and paused. 'I sometimes think,' she went on, with more energy, 'that David will be quite different some day from what he has been. I'm sure he'll want to teach Sandy.'

'He's got nothing to teach him!' cried Dora. Then she added in another voice—a voice of wounded feeling—'If he was to be brought up an atheist, I don't think David ought to have asked me to be godmother.'

'He shan't be brought up an atheist,' exclaimed Lucy, startled. Then, feeling the subject too much for her—for it provoked in her a mingled train of memories which she had not words enough to express—she turned back to her work, leaving the book on the table and the discussion pending.

'David's dreadfully late,' she said, discontentedly, looking at the clock.

'Where is he?'

'Down in Ancoats, I expect. He told me he had a committee there to-day after work, about those houses he's going to pull down. He's got Mr. Buller and Mr. Haycraft—and'—Lucy named some half-dozen more rich and well-known men—'to help him, and they're going to pull down one of the worst bits of James Street, David says, and build up new houses for working people. He's wild about it. Oh, I know we'll have no money at all left soon!' cried Lucy indignantly, with a shrug of her small shoulders.

Dora smiled at what seemed to her a childish petulance.

'Why, I'm sure you've got everything very nice, Lucy, and all you want.'

'No, indeed, I *haven't* got all I want,' said Lucy, looking up and frowning; 'I never shall, neither. I want David to be—to be—like everybody else. He might be a rich man to-morrow if he wouldn't have such ideas. He doesn't think a bit about me and Sandy. I told you what would happen when he made that division between the bookselling and the printing, and took up with those ideas about the men. I knew he'd come not to care about the bookselling. And I was *perfectly* right! There's that printing-office getting bigger and bigger, and crowds of men waiting to be taken on, and such a lot of business doing as never was. And are we a bit the richer? Not a penny—or hardly. It's sickening to hear the way people talk about him! Why, they say the last election wouldn't have been nearly so good for the Liberals all about the North if it hadn't been for the things he's always publishing and the two papers he started last year. He might be a member of Parliament any day, and he wouldn't be a member of Parliament—not he! He told me he didn't care twopence about it. No, he doesn't care for anything but just taking *our* money and giving it to other people—there! You may say what you like, but it's true.'

The wilful energy with which Lucy spoke the last words transformed the small face—brought out the harder lines on it.

'Well, I never know what it is that *you* want exactly,' said Dora. 'I don't think you do yourself.'

Lucy stitched silently, her thin red lips pressed together. She knew perfectly well what she wanted, only she was ashamed to confess it to the religious and ascetic Dora. Her ideal of living was filled in with images and desires abundantly derived from Manchester life, where every day she saw people grow rich rapidly, and rise as a matter of course into that

upper region of gentility, carriages, servants, wines, and grouse-moors, whither, ever since it had become plain to her that David could, if he chose, easily place her there, it had been her constant craving to go. Other people came to be gentlefolks and lord it over the land—why not they? It made her mad, as she had said to Dora, to see *their* money—their very own money—chucked away to other people, and they getting no good of it, and remaining mere working booksellers and printers as before.

‘Why don’t you go and help him?’ said Dora suddenly. ‘Perhaps if you were to go right in and see what he’s doing, you wouldn’t mind it so much. You might get to like it. He doesn’t want to keep everything to himself—he wants to share with those that need. If there were a good many others like that, perhaps there’d be fewer awful things happening down at Ancoats.’

A sigh rose to her lips. Her beautiful eyes grew sad.

‘Well, I did try once or twice,’ said Lucy, pettishly, ‘but I’ve always told you that sort of thing isn’t in my line. Of course I understand about giving away, and all that. But he’ll hardly let you give away at all! He says it’s pauperising the people. And the things he wants me to do—I never seem to do ’em right, and I can’t get to care a bit about them.’

The tone in her voice betrayed a past experience which had been in some way trying and discouraging to a fine natural vanity.

Dora did not answer. She played absently with the little book on the table.

‘Oh! but he’s going to let us accept the invitation to Benet’s Park—I didn’t tell you that,’ said Lucy suddenly, her face clearing.

Dora was startled.

‘Why, I thought you told me he wouldn’t go?’

‘So I did. But—well, I let out!’ said Lucy, colouring, ‘and he’s changed his mind. But I’m rather in a fright, Dora, though I don’t tell him. Think of that big house and all those servants—I’m more frightened of *them* than of anybody! I say, *do* you think my new dresses ’ll do? You’ll come up and look at them, won’t you? Not that you’re much use about dresses.’

Dora was profoundly interested and somewhat bewildered. That her little cousin Lucy, Purcell’s daughter and Daddy’s niece, should be going to stay as an invited guest in a castle, with an earl and countess, was very amazing. Was it because the Radicals had got the upper hand so much at the election? She could not understand it, but some of her old girlishness, her old interest in small womanish trifles, came back upon her, and she discussed the details of what Lucy might expect so eagerly that Lucy was quite delighted with her.

In the middle of their talk a step was heard in the hall.

‘Ah, there he is!’ said Lucy; ‘now we’ll ring for supper, and I’ll go and get ready.’

Dora sat alone for a few minutes, and then David came in.

‘Ah! Dora, this is nice. Lucy says you will stay to supper. We get so busy, you and I, we see each other much too seldom.’

He spoke in his most cordial, brotherly tone, and, standing on the rug with his back to the fire, he looked down upon her with evident pleasure.

As for her, though the throb of her young passion had been so soon and so sternly silenced, it was still happiness to her to be in the same room with David Grieve, and any unusual kindness from him, or a long

talk with him, would often send her back to her little room in Ancoats stored with a cheerful warmth of soul which helped her through many days. For of late years she had been more liable than of old to fits of fretting—fretting about her father, about her own sins and other people's, about the little worries of her Sunday school class, or the little rubs of church work. The contact with a nature so large and stimulating, though sometimes it angered and depressed her through the influence of religious considerations, was yet on the whole of infinite service to her, of more service than she knew.

'Have you forgiven me for upsetting Sandy?' she asked him, with a smile.

'I'm on the way to it. I left him just now prancing about Lucy's bed, and making an abominable noise. She told him to be quiet, whereupon he indignantly informed her that he was "a dwagon hunting wats." So I imagine he hasn't had "the wrong dinner" to-day.'

They both laughed.

'And you have been in Ancoats?'

'Yes,' said David, tossing back his black hair with an animated gesture, and thrusting his hands into his pockets. 'Yes—we are getting on. We have got the whole of that worst James Street court into our hands. We shall begin pulling down directly, and the plans for the new buildings are almost ready. And we have told all the old tenants that they shall have a prior claim on the new rooms if they choose to come back. Some will; for a good many others of course we shall be too respectable, though I am set on keeping the plans as simple and the rents as low as possible.'

Dora sat looking at him with somewhat perplexed eyes.

Her Christianity had been originally of the older

High Church type, wherein the ideal of personal holiness had not yet been fused with the ideal of social service. The care of the poor and needy was, of course, indispensable to the Christian life; but she thought first and most of bringing them to church, and to the blessing and efficacy of the sacraments; then of giving them money when they were sick, and assuring to them the Church's benediction in dying. The modern fuss about overcrowded houses and insanitary conditions—the attack on bricks and mortar—the preaching of temperance, education, thrift—these things often seemed to Christian people of Dora's type and day, if they spoke their true minds, to be tinged with atheism and secularism. They were jealous all the time for something better. They instinctively felt that the pre-eminence of certain ideas, most dear to them, was threatened by this absorption in the detail of the mere human life.

Something of this it was that passed vaguely through Dora's mind as she sat listening to David's further talk about his Ancoats scheme; and at last, influenced, perhaps, by a half-conscious realisation of her demur—it was only that—he let it drop.

'What is that book?' he said, his quick eye detecting the little paper-covered volume on Lucy's table. And, stepping forward, he took it up.

Dora unexpectedly found her voice a little husky as she replied, and had to clear her throat.

'It is a book I brought for Lucy. Sandy is a baptized Christian, David. Lucy wants to teach him, so I brought her this little Catechism, which Father Russell recommends.'

David turned the book over in silence. He read a passage concerning the Virgin Mary; another, in which the child asked about the number and names of the Archangels, gave a detailed answer; another in

which Dissenters were handled with an acrimony which contrasted with a general tone of sweetness and unction.

David laid it down on the mantelpiece.

'No, Dora, I can't have Sandy taught out of this.'

He spoke with dignity, but with an endeavour to make his tone as gentle as possible.

Dora was silent a moment; then she broke out:

'What will you teach him, then? Is he to be a Christian at all?'

'In a sense, yes; with all my heart, yes! so far, at least, as his father has any share in the matter.'

'And is his mother to have no voice?' Dora went on with growing bitterness and hurry. 'And as for me—why did you let me be his godmother? I take it seriously, and I may do nothing.'

'You may do everything,' he said, sitting down beside her, 'except teach him extreme matter of this kind, which, because I am what I am, will make a critic of the child before his time. I am not a bigot, Dora! I shall not interfere with Lucy; she would not teach him in this way. She talks to him; and she instinctively feels for me, and what she says comes softly and vaguely to him. It is different with things like this, set down in black and white, and to be learnt by heart. You must remember that half of it seems to me false history, and some of it false morals.'

He looked at her anxiously. The jarring note was hateful to him. He had always taken for granted that Lucy was under Dora's influence religiously—had perhaps made it an excuse for a gradual withdrawal of his inmost mind from his wife, which in reality rested on quite other reasons. But his heart was full of dreams about his son. He could not let Dora have her way there.

'Oh, how different it is,' cried Dora, in a low, intense voice, twining her hands together, 'from what I once thought!'

'No!' he said, vehemently, 'there is no real difference between you and me—there never can be; teach Sandy to be good and to love you! That's what I should like!'

His eyes were full of emotion, but he smiled. Dora, however, could not respond. The inner tension was too strong. She turned away, and began fidgeting with Lucy's workbag.

Then a small voice and a preparatory turmoil were heard outside.

'Auntie Dora! Auntie Dora!' cried Sandy, rushing in with a hop, skip, and a jump, and flourishing a picture-book, 'look at zese pickers! Dat's a buffalo—most *estronr*ary animal, the buffalo!'

'Come here, rascal!' called his father, and the child ran up to him. David knelt to look at the picture, but the little fellow suddenly dropped it and his interest in it, in a way habitual to him, twined one arm round his father's neck, laid his cheek against David's, crossed one foot over the other, and, thumb in mouth, looked Dora up and down with his large, observant eyes.

Dora, melted, wooed him to come to her. Her adoration of him was almost on a level with David's. Sandy took a minute to think whether he should leave his father. Then he climbed her knee, and patronised her on the subject of buffaloes and giraffes—'I tan't 'splain everything to you, Auntie Dora; you'll know when you're older'—till Lucy and supper came together. And supper was brightened both by Lucy's secret content in the prospect of the Benet's Park visit and by the child's humours. When Dora said good night to her host, their manner to each other



had its usual fraternal quality. Nevertheless, the woman carried away with her both resentment and distress.

About a fortnight later David and Lucy started one fine October afternoon for Benet's Park. The cab was crowded with Lucy's luggage, and David, in new clothes to please his wife, felt himself, as the cab door closed upon them, a trapped and miserable man.

What had possessed Lord Driffield to send that unlucky note? For Lord Driffield himself David had a grateful and real affection. Ever since that whimsical scholar had first taken kindly notice of the boy-tradesman, there had been a growing friendship between the two; and of late years Lord Driffield's interest in David's development and career had become particularly warm and cordial. He had himself largely contributed to the subtler sides of that development, had helped to refine the ambitions and raise the standards of the growing intellect; his advice, owing to his lifelong commerce with and large possession of books, had often been of great practical use to the young man; his library had for years been at David's service, both for reference and borrowing; and he had supplied his favourite with customers and introductions in a large percentage of the University towns both at home and abroad, a social *milieu* where Lord Driffield was more at home and better appreciated than in any other. The small delicately featured man, whose distinguished face, with its abundant waves of silky hair—once ruddy, now a goldenish white—presided so oddly over an incorrigible shabbiness of dress, had become a familiar figure in David's life. Their friendship, of course, was limited to a very definite region of thought and relation; but they corresponded freely, when they were apart, on matters of

literature, bibliography, sometimes of politics; and no sooner was the Earl at Benet's Park than David had constant calls from him in his office at the back of the now spacious and important establishment in Prince's Street.

But Lord Driffield, as we know, had managed his mind better than his marriage, and his *savoir vivre* was no match for his learning. He bore his spouse and his country-gentleman life patiently enough in general; but every now and then he fell into exasperation. His wife flooded him too persistently, perhaps, with cousins and grandees of the duller sort, whose ideas seemed to him as raw as their rent-rolls were large—till he rebelled. Then he would have *his* friends; selecting them more or less at random from up and down the ranks of literature and science, till Lady Driffield raised her eyebrows, invited a certain number of her own set to keep her in countenance, and made up her mind to endure. At the end of the ordeal Lord Driffield generally made the rueful reflection that it had not gone off well. But he felt the better and digested the better for the self-assertion of it, and it was periodically renewed.

David and Lucy Grieve had been asked in some such moment of domestic annoyance. The Earl had seen 'Grieve's wife' twice, and hastily remembered that she seemed 'a presentable little person.' He was constitutionally indifferent to and contemptuous of women. But he imagined that it would please David to bring his wife; and he was perhaps tolerably certain, since no one, be he rake or savant, possesses an historical name and domain without knowing it, that it would please the bookseller's wife to be invited.

David suspected a good deal of this, for he knew his man pretty well. As he sat opposite to Lucy in the railway carriage—first-class, since she felt it in-

congruous to go in anything else—he recalled certain luncheons at Benet's Park, when he had been doing a bit of work in the library during the family sojourn. Certainly Lucy did not realise at all how formidable these aristocratic women could be!

And his pride—at bottom the workman's pride—was made uncomfortable by his wife's *newness*. New hat, new dress, new gloves! Himself too! It annoyed him that Lady Driffield should be so plainly informed that great pains had been taken for her. He felt irritable and out of gear. Being neither self-conscious nor awkward, he became both for the moment, out of sympathy with Lucy.

Yet Lucy was supremely happy as they sped along to Stalybridge. Suppose her father heard of it! She could no doubt insure his knowing; but it might set his back up still more, make him more mad than before with her and David. Eight years and more since he had spoken to her, and the other day, when he had seen her coming in Deansgate, he had crossed to the other side of the street!—Were those sleeves of her evening dress quite right? They were not caught down, she thought, quite in the right place. No doubt there would be time before dinner to put in a stitch. And she did hope that pleat from the neck would look all right. It was peculiar, but Miss Helby had assured her it was much worn. Would there be many titled people, she wondered, and would all the ladies wear diamonds? She thought disconsolately of the little black enamelled locket and the Roman pearls, which were all the adornments she possessed.

After a short journey they alighted at their station as the dusk was beginning.

'Are you for Benet's Park, m'm?' said the porter to Lucy. 'All right!—the carriage is just outside.'

Lucy held herself an inch taller, and waited for

David to come back from the van with their two new portmanteaus.

Meanwhile she noticed two other groups of people, whose bags and rugs were being appropriated by a couple of powdered footmen—a husband and wife, and a tall military-looking man accompanied by two ladies. The two ladies belonged to the height of fashion—of that Lucy was certain, as she stole an intimidated glance at the cut of their tailor-made gowns and the costliness of the fur cloak which one of them carried. As for the other lady, could she also be on her way to Benet's Park—with this uncouth figure, this mannish height and breadth, this complete lack of waist, these large arms and hands, and the over-ample garments and hat, of green cashmere slashed with yellow, in which she was marvellously arrayed? Yet she seemed entirely at her ease, which was more than Lucy was, and her little dark husband was already talking with the tall ladies.

David, having captured the luggage, was accosted by one of the footmen, who then came up to Lucy and took her bag. She and David followed in his wake, and found themselves mingling with the other five persons, who were clearly to be their fellow-guests.

As they stood outside the station door, the elder of the two ladies turned and ran a scrutinising eye over Lucy and the person in sage green following her; then she said rapidly to the gentleman with her:

‘Now, remember Mathilde can’t go outside, and I prefer to have her with me.’

‘Well, I suppose there’ll be room in the omnibus,’ said he, shortly. ‘I shall go in the dog-cart and get a smoke. By George! those are good horses of Driffeld’s! And they are not the pair I sent him over from Ireland in the autumn either.’

He went down the steps, patted and examined the

horses, and threw a word or two to the coachman. Lucy, palpitating with excitement and alarm, felt a corresponding awe of the person who could venture such familiarities even with the servants and live-stock of Benet's Park.

The servant let down the steps of the smart omnibus with its impatient steeds. The two tall ladies got in.

'Mathilde!' called the elder.

A little maid, dressed in black, and carrying a large dressing-bag, hurried down the steps before the remaining guests, and was helped in by the footman. The lady in sage green smiled at her husband—a sleepy, humorous smile. Then she stepped in, the footman touching his hat to her as though he knew her.

'Any maid, m'm?' said the man to Lucy, as she was following.

'No—oh *no*!' said Lucy, stumbling in. 'Give me my bag, please.'

The man gave it to her, and timidly looking round her she settled herself in the smallest space and the remotest corner she could.

When the carriage rolled off, the lady in green looked out of window for a while at the dark flying fields and woods, over which the stars were beginning to come out.

'Are you a stranger in these parts, or do you know Benet's Park already?' she said presently to Lucy, who was next her, in a pleasant, nonchalant way.

'I have never been here before,' said Lucy, dreading somehow the sound of her own voice; 'but my husband is well acquainted with the family.'

She was pleased with her own phrase, and began to recover herself. The lady said no more, however, but leant back and apparently went to sleep. The tall ladies presently did the same. Lucy's depression re-

turned as the silence lasted. She supposed that it was aristocratic not to talk to people till you had been introduced to them. She hoped she would be introduced when they reached Benet's Park. Otherwise it would be awkward, staying in the same house.

Then she fell into a dream, imagining herself with a maid—ordering her about deliciously—saying to the handsome footman 'my maid has my wraps'—and then with the next jolt of the carriage waking up to the humdrum and unwelcome reality. And David might be as rich as anybody! Familiar resentments and cravings stirred in her, and her drive became even less of a pleasure than before. As for David, he spent the whole of it in lively conversation with the small dark man, beside the window.

The carriage paused a moment. Then great gates were swung back and in they sped, the horses stepping out smartly now that they were within scent of home. There was a darkness as of thick and lofty trees, then dim opening stretches of park; lastly a huge house, mirage-like in the distance, with rows of lighted windows, a crackling of crisp gravel, the sound of the drag, and a pomp of opening doors.

'Shall I take your bag, Madam?' said a magnificent person, bending towards Lucy, as, clinging to her possession, she followed the lady in green into the outer hall.

'Oh no, thank you! at least, shall I find it again?' said the frightened Lucy, looking in front of her at the vast hall, with its tall lamps and statues and innumerable doors.

'It shall be sent upstairs for you, Madam,' said the magnificent person gravely, and, as Lucy thought, severely.

She submitted, and looked round for David. Oh, where was he?

‘This is a fine hall, isn’t it?’ said the lady in green beside her. ‘Bad period—but good of its kind. What on earth do they spoil it for with those shocking modern portraits?’

Such assurance—combined with such garments—in such a house—it was nothing short of a miracle!

### CHAPTER III

‘Now, Lavinia, do be kind to young Mrs. Grieve. She is evidently as shy as she can be.’

So spoke Lord Driffeld, with some annoyance in his voice, as he looked into his wife’s room after dressing for dinner.

‘I suppose she can amuse herself like other people,’ said Lady Driffeld. She was standing by the fire warming a satin-shoed foot. ‘I have told Williams to leave all the houses open to-morrow. And there’s church, and the pictures. The Danbys and the rest of us are going over to Lady Herbart’s for tea.’

A cloud came over Lord Driffeld’s face. He made some impatient exclamation, which was muffled by his white beard and moustache, and walked back to his own room.

Meanwhile Lucy, in another corridor of the great house, was standing before a long glass, looking herself up and down in a tumult of excitement and anxiety.

She had just passed through a formidable hour! In a great gallery, with polished floor, and hung with portraits of ancestral Driffelds, the party from the station had found Lady Driffeld, with five or six other people, who seemed to be already staying in the house. Though the butler had preceded them, no

names but those of Lady Venetia Danby and Miss Danby had been announced; and when Lady Driffield, a tall effective-looking woman, with a cold eye and an expressionless voice, said a short 'How do you do?' and extended a few fingers to David and his wife, no names were mentioned, and Lucy felt a sudden depressing conviction that no names were needed. To the mistress of the house they were just two nonentities, to whom she was to give bed and board for two nights to gratify her husband's whims; whether their insignificant name happened to be Grieve, or Tompkins, or Johnson, mattered nothing.

So Lucy had sat down in a subdued state of mind, and was handed tea by a servant, while the Danbys—Colonel Danby, after his smoke in the dog-cart, following close on the heels of his wife and daughter—mixed with the group round the tea-table, and much chatter, combined with a free use of Christian names, liberal petting of Lady Driffield's Pomeranian, and an account by Miss Danby of an accident to herself in the hunting-field, filled up a half-hour which to one person, at least, had the qualities of a nightmare. David was talking to the lady in green—to whom, by the way, Lady Driffield had been distinctly civil. Once he came over to relieve Lucy from a waterproof which was on her knee, and to get her some bread and butter. But otherwise no one took any notice of her, and she fell into a nervous terror lest she should upset her cup, or drop her teaspoon, or scatter her crumbs on the floor.

Then at last Lord Driffield, who had been absent on some country business, which his soul loathed, had come in, and with the cordiality, nay, affection of his greeting to David, and the kindness of his notice of herself, little Lucy's spirits had risen at a bound. She felt instinctively that a protector had arrived, and



even the formidable procession upstairs in the wake of Lady Driffield, when the moment at last arrived for showing the guests to their rooms, had passed off safely, Lucy throwing out an agitated 'Thank you!' when Lady Driffield had even gone so far as to open a door with her own bediamonded hand, which had Mrs. Grieve's plebeian appellations written in full upon the card attached to it.

And now! *Was* the dress nice? Would it do? Unluckily, since Lucy's rise in the social scale which had marked the last few years, the sureness of her original taste in dress had somewhat deserted her. Her natural instinct was for trimness and closeness; but of late her ideals had been somewhat confused by a new and more important dressmaker with 'æsthetic' notions, who had been recommended to her by the good-natured and artistic wife of one of the College professors. Under the guidance of this expert, she had chosen a '*Watteau sacque*' from a fashion-plate, not quite daring, little tradesman's daughter as she felt herself at bottom, to venture on the undisguised low neck and short sleeves of ordinary fashionable dress.

She said fretfully to herself that she could see nothing in this vast room. More and more candles did she light with a trembling hand, trusting devoutly that no one would come in and discover her with such an extravagant illumination. Then she tried each of the two long glasses of the room in turn. Her courage mounted. *It was* pretty. The terra-cotta shade was *exquisite*, and *no* one could tell that the satin was cotton-backed. The flowing sleeves and the pleat from the shoulder gave her dignity, she was certain; and she had done her hair beautifully. She wished David would come in and see! But his room was across a little landing, which, indeed, seemed to

be all their own, for it was shut off from the passage they had entered from by an outer door. There was, however, more than one door opening on to the landing, and Lucy was so much afraid of her surroundings that she preferred to wait till he came.

Meanwhile—what a bedroom! Why, it was more gorgeous than any drawing-room she had ever entered. Every article of furniture was of old marqueterie, adapted to modern uses, the appointments of the writing-table were of solid silver—Lucy had eagerly ascertained the fact by looking at the ‘marks’—and as for the *towels*, she simply could not have imagined that such things were made! Her little soul was in a whirl of envy, admiration, pride. What tales she would have to tell Dora when they got home!

‘Are you ready?’ said David, opening the door. ‘I believe I hear people going downstairs.’

He came in arrayed in the new dress suit which became him as well as anything else; for he had a natural dignity which absorbed and surmounted any novelty of circumstance or setting, and was purely a matter of character, depending upon a mind familiar with large interests and launched towards ideal aims. He might be silent, melancholy, impracticable, but never meanly self-conscious. It had rarely occurred to anyone to pity or condescend to David Grieve.

Lucy looked at him with uneasy pride. Then she glanced back at her own reflection in the glass.

‘What do you think of it?’ she asked him, eagerly.

‘Magnificent!’ said David, with all the sincerity of ignorance—wishing, moreover, to make his wife pleased with herself. ‘But oughtn’t you to have gloves instead of those things?’

He pointed doubtfully to the mittens on her arms.

‘Oh, David, don’t say that!’ cried Lucy, in despair. ‘Miss Helby said these were the right things. It’s

to be like an old picture, don't you understand? and I haven't got any gloves but those I came in. Oh, don't be so disagreeable!'

She looked ready to cry. Poor David hastened to declare that Miss Helby must be right, and that it was all very nice. Then they blew out the candles and ventured forth.

'Lord Driffield says that Canon Aylwin is coming,' said David, examining some Hollar engravings on the wall of the staircase as they descended, 'and the Dean of Bradford, who is staying with him. I shall be glad to see Canon Aylwin.'

His face took a pleased meditative look. He was thinking of Canon Aylwin's last volume of essays—of their fine scholarship, their delicate, unique qualities of style. As for Lucy, it seemed to her that all the principalities and powers of this world were somehow arraying themselves against her in that terrible drawing-room they were so soon to enter. She set her teeth, held up her head, and on they went.

Presently they found themselves approaching a glass door, which opened into the central hall. Beyond it was a crowd of figures and a buzz of talk, and at the door stood a tall person in black with white gloves, holding a silver tray, from which he presented David with a button-hole. Then, with a manner at once suave and impersonal, he held open the door, and the husband and wife passed through.

'Ah, my dear Grieve,' said Lord Driffield, laying his hand on David's shoulder, 'come here and be introduced to Canon Aylwin. I am delighted to have caught him for you.'

So David was swept away to the other side of the room, and Lucy was left forlorn and stranded. It seemed to her an immense party; there were at least eight or ten fresh faces beyond those she had seen

already. And just as she was looking for a seat into which she might slip and hide herself, Lady Venetia Danby, who was standing near, playing with a huge feather fan and talking to a handsome young man, turned round by chance and, seeing the figure in the bright-coloured '*Watteau sacque*,' involuntarily put up her eyeglass to look at it. Instantly Lucy, conscious of the eyeglass, and looking hurriedly round on the people near, was certain that the pleat from the shoulder and the mittens were irretrievably wrong and conspicuous, and that she had betrayed herself at once by her dress as an ignoramus and an outsider. Worst of all, the lady in green was in a *sacque* too!—a shapeless yellow thing of the most untutored and detestable make. Mittens also! drawn laboriously over the hands and arms of an Amazon. Lucy glanced at Miss Danby beside her, then at a beautiful woman in pale pink across the room—at their slim waists, the careless *aplomb* and grace with which the costly stuffs and gleaming jewels were worn, and the white necks displayed—and sank into a chair trembling and miserable. That the only person to keep her in countenance should be that particular person—that they two should thus fall into a class together, by themselves, cut off from all the rest—it was too much! Then, by a quick reaction, some of her natural obstinacy returned upon her. She held herself erect, and looked steadily round the room.

'Mr. Edwardes—Mrs. Grieve,' said Lady Driffield's impassive voice, speaking, as it seemed to Lucy, from a great height, as the tall figure swept past her to introductions more important.

A young man bowed to Lucy, looked at her for a moment, then, pulling his fair moustache, turned away to speak to Miss Danby, who, in the absence of more stimulating suitors for her smiles, was graciously

pleased to bestow a few of them on Lord Driffield's new agent.

'Whom are we waiting for?' said Miss Danby, looking round her, and slightly glancing at Lucy.

'Only the Dean, I believe,' said Mr. Edwardes, with a smile. 'I never knew Dean Manley less than half an hour late in *this* house.'

A cold shiver ran through Lucy. Then they—she and David—had been all but the last, had all but kept the whole of this portentous gathering waiting for them.

In the midst of her new tremor the glass doors were again thrown open, and in walked the Dean—a short, plain man, with a mirthful eye, a substantial person, and legs which became his knee-breeches.

'Thirty-five minutes, Dean!' said the handsome youth who had been talking to Lady Venetia, as he held up his watch.

'It is a remarkable fact, Reggie,' said the Dean, laying his hand on the lad's shoulder, 'that your watch has gained persistently ever since I was first acquainted with you. Ah, well, keep it ahead, my boy. A diplomatist must be egged on somehow.'

'I thought the one condition of success in that trade was the patience to do nothing,' said a charming voice. 'Don't interfere with Reggie's prospects, Dean.'

'Has he got any?' said the Dean, maliciously. 'My dear Mrs. Wellesdon, you are a "sight for sair een."'

And he pressed the new-comer's hand between both his own, surveying her the while with a fatherly affection and admiration.

Lucy looked up, a curious envy at her heart. She saw the beautiful lady in pink, who had come across the room to greet the Dean. *Was* she beautiful? Lucy hurriedly asked herself. Perhaps not, in point of feature, but she held her head so nobly, her colour

was so subtle and lovely, her eye so speaking, and her mouth so sweet, she carried about with her a pre-eminence so natural and human, that beauty was in truth the only word that fitted her. Now, as the Dean passed on from her to some one else, she glanced down at the little figure in terra-cotta satin, and, with a kindly diffident expression, she sat down and began to talk to Lucy. Marcia Wellesdon was a sorceress, and could win whatever hearts she pleased. In a few moments she so soothed Lucy's nervousness that she even beguiled from her some bright and natural talk about the journey and the house, and Lucy was rapidly beginning to be happy, when the signal for dinner was given, and a general move began.

At dinner Mr. Edwardes bestowed his conversation for a decent space of time—say, during the soup and fish—upon Mrs. Grieve. Lucy, once more ill at ease, tried eagerly to propitiate him by asking innumerable questions about the family, and the pictures, and the estate, it being at once evident that he had an intimate knowledge of all three. But as the family, the pictures, and the estate were always with him, so to speak, made, indeed, a burden which his shoulders had some difficulty in carrying, the attractions of this vein of talk palled on the young agent—who was himself a scion of good family, with his own social ambitions—before long. He decided that Mrs. Grieve was pure middle-class, not at all accustomed to dine in halls of pride, and much agitated by her surroundings. The type did not interest him. She seemed to be asking him to help her out of the mire, and as one does not go into society to be benevolent but to be amused, by the time the first *entrée* was well in he had edged his chair round, and was in animated talk with pretty little Lady Alice Findlay, the daughter of the hook-nosed Lord-Lieutenant of the county, who was

seated at Lady Driffield's right hand. Lucy noticed the immediate difference in tone, the easy variety of topic, compared with her own sense of difficulty, and her heart swelled with bitterness.

Then, to her horror, she saw that, from inattention and ignorance of what might be expected, she had allowed the servants to fill every single wineglass of the four standing at her right—positively every one. Sherry, claret, hock, champagne—she was provided with them all. She cast a hurried and guilty eye round the table. Save for champagne, each lady's glasses stood immaculately empty, and when Lucy came back to her own collection she could bear it no longer.

'Mr. Edwardes!' she said hastily, leaning over towards him.

The young man turned abruptly. 'Yes,' he said, looking at her in some surprise.

'Oh, Mr. Edwardes! can you ask some one to take these wineglasses away? I didn't want any, and it looks so—so—dreadful!'

The agent thought that Mrs. Grieve was going to cry. As for himself, his eye twinkled, and he had great difficulty to restrain a burst of laughter. He called a footman near, and Lucy was soon relieved of her fourfold incubus.

'Oh, but you must save the champagne!' he said, and, bending his chair backward, he was about to recall the man, when Lucy stopped him.

'Don't—don't, *please*, Mr. Edwardes!' she said, in an agony.

He lifted his eyebrows good-humouredly, and desisted. Then he asked her if he should give her some water, and when that was done the episode apparently seemed to him closed, for he turned away again, and looked out for fresh opportunities with Lady Alice.

Lucy, meanwhile, was left feeling herself even more unsuccessful and more out of place than before, and ready to sink with vexation. And how well David was getting on! There he was, between Mrs. Shepton and the beautiful lady in pink, and he and Mrs. Wellesdon were deep in conversation, his dark head bent gravely towards her, his face melting every now and then into laughter or crossed by some vivid light of assent and pleasure. Lucy's look travelled over the table, the orchids with which it was covered, the lights, the plate, then to the Vandykes behind the guests, and the great mirrors in between—came back to the table, and passed from face to face, till again it rested upon David. The conviction of her husband's handsome looks and natural adequacy to this or any world, with which her survey ended, brought with it a strange mixture of feelings—half pleasure, half bitterness.

'Are you from this part of the world, may I ask?' said a voice at her elbow.

She turned, and saw Colonel Danby, who was tired of devoting himself to the wife of a neighbouring Master of Hounds—a lady with white hair and white eyelashes, always apparently on the point of sleep, even at the liveliest dinner-table—and was now inclined to see what this little provincial might be made of.

'Oh, yes! we are from Manchester,' said Lucy, straightening herself, and preparing to do her best. 'We live in Manchester—at least, of course, not *in* Manchester. No one could do that.'

It was but three years since she had ceased to do it, but new habits of speech grow apace when it is a matter of social prestige. She was terribly afraid lest anybody should now think of them as persons who lived over their shop.



'Ah!—suppose not,' said Colonel Danby, carelessly. 'Land in Manchester, they tell me now, is almost as costly as it is in London.'

Whereat Lucy went off at score, delighted to make Manchester important and to produce her own information. She had an aptitude for business gossip, and she chatted eagerly about the price that So-and-So had paid for their new warehouses, and the sum which report said the Corporation was going to spend on a fine new street.

'And of course many people don't like it. There's always grumbling about the rates. But they should have public spirit, shouldn't they? Are you acquainted with Manchester?' she added, more timidly.

All this time Colonel Danby had been listening with half an ear, and was much more assiduously trying to make up his mind whether the little *bourgeoise* was pretty at all. She had rather a fine pair of eyes—he supposed she had made that dress in her own back parlour.

'Manchester? I—oh, I have spent a night at the Queen's Hotel now and then,' said the Colonel, with a yawn. 'What do you do there? Do you amuse yourself—eh?'

His smile was not pleasant. He had a florid face, with bad lines round the eyes and a tyrannous mouth. His physical make had been magnificent, but reckless living had brought on the penalties of gout before their time.

Lucy was intimidated by the mixture of familiarity and patronage in the tone.

'Oh, yes,' she said, hurriedly; 'we get all the best companies from the London theatres, and there are *very* good concerts.'

'And that kind of thing amuses you?' said the Colonel, still examining her with the same cool, fixed glance.

'I like music very much,' stammered Lucy, and then fell silent.

'Do you know all these people here?'

'Oh, dear, no!' she cried, feeling the very question malevolent. 'I don't know any of them. My husband wishes to lead a very retired life,' she added, bridleing a little, by way of undoing the effect of her admissions.

'And *you* don't wish it?'

The disagreeable eyes smiled again.

'Oh! I don't know,' said Lucy.

Colonel Danby reflected that whatever his companion might be, she was not amusing.

'Have you noticed the gentleman opposite?' he inquired, stifling another yawn.

Lucy timidly looked across.

'It is—it is the Dean of Bradford, isn't it?'

'Yes; it's a comfort, isn't it, when one can know a man by his clothes? Do you see what his deanship has had for dinner?'

Lucy ventured another look, and saw that the Dean had in front of him a plate of biscuits and a glass of water, and that the condition of his knives and forks showed him to have hitherto subsisted on this fare alone.

'Is he so very—so very religious?' she said, wondering.

'A saint in gaiters? Well, I don't know. Probably the saint has dined at one. Do you feel any inclination to be a saint, Mrs. Grieve?'

Lucy could neither meet nor parry the banter of his look. She only blushed.

'I wouldn't attempt it, if I were you,' he said, laughing. 'Those pretty brown eyes weren't meant for it.'

Lucy suddenly felt as though she had been struck,

so free and cavalier was the tone. Her cheek took a deeper crimson, and she looked helplessly across at David.

‘Little fool!’ thought the Colonel. ‘But she has certainly some points.’

At that moment Lady Driffield gave the signal, and, with a half-ironical bow to his companion, Colonel Danby rose, picked up her handkerchief for her, and drew his chair aside to let her pass.

Presently Lucy was sitting in a corner of the magnificent green drawing-room, to which Lady Driffield had carelessly led the way. In her vague humiliation and unhappiness, she craved that some one should come and talk to her and be kind to her—even Mrs. Shepton, who had addressed a few pleasant remarks to her on their way from the dining-room. But Mrs. Shepton was absorbed by Lady Driffield, who sat down beside her, and took some trouble to talk. ‘Then why not to me?’ was Lucy’s instinctive thought. For she realised that she and Mrs. Shepton were socially not far apart. Yet Lady Driffield had so far addressed about six words to Mrs. David Grieve, while she was now bending her aristocratic neck to listen to Mrs. Shepton, who was talking entirely at her ease, with her arm round the back of a neighbouring chair, and, as it seemed to Lucy, about politics.

The rest of the ladies, with the exception of the Master of Hounds’ wife, who sat in a chair by the fire and dozed, were all either old friends or relations, and they gathered in a group on the Aubusson rug in front of the fire, chatting merrily about their common kindred, the visits they had paid, or were to pay, the fate of their fathers and brothers in the recent election, ‘the Duke’s’ terrible embarrassments, or ‘Sir Alfred’s’ yachting party to Norway, of which little Lady Alice gave a sparkling account.

In her chair on the outskirts of the talkers, Lucy sat painfully turning over the leaves of a costly collection of autographs, which lay on the table near her. Sometimes she tried to interest herself in the splendid room, with its hangings of pale flowered silk, its glass cases, full of historical relics, miniatures, and precious things, representing the long and brilliant past of the house of Driffield, the Sir Joshuas and Romneys, which repeated on the walls the grace and physical perfection of some of the living women below. But she had too few associations with anything she saw to care for it, and, indeed, her mind was too wholly given to her own vague, but overmastering sense of isolation and defeat. If it were only bedtime!

Mrs. Wellesdon glanced at the solitary figure from time to time, but Lady Alice had her arm round 'Marcia's' waist, and kept close hold of her favourite cousin. At last, however, Mrs. Wellesdon drew the young girl with her to the side of Lucy's chair, and, sitting down by the stranger, they both tried to entertain her, and to show her some of the things in the room.

Lucy brightened up at once, and thought them both the most beautiful and fascinating of human beings. But her good fortune was soon over, alas! for the gentlemen came in, and the social elements were once more redistributed. 'Reggie,' the young diplomatist, freshly returned from Berlin, laid hold of his sister Marcia, and his cousin Lady Alice, and carried them off for a family gossip in a corner of the room, whence peals of young laughter were soon to be heard from him and Lady Alice.

Mr. Edwardes and Colonel Danby passed Mrs. Grieve by, in quest of metal more attractive; Lord Driffield, the Dean, Canon Aylwin, and David stood absorbed in conversation; while Lady Driffield trans-

ferred her attentions to Mr. Shepton, and the husband of the lady by the fire walked up to her, insisting, somewhat crossly, on waking her. Lucy was once more left alone.

‘Lavinia, haven’t we done our duty to this apartment?’ cried Lord Driffield, impatiently; ‘it always puts me on stilts. The library is ten times more comfortable. I propose an adjournment.’

Lady Driffield shrugged her shoulders, and assented. So the whole party, Lucy timidly attaching herself to Mrs. Shepton, moved slowly through a long suite of beautiful rooms, till they reached the great cedar-fitted library, which was Lord Driffield’s paradise. Here was every book to be desired of the scholar to make him wise, and every chair to make him comfortable. Lord Driffield went to one of the bookcases, and took a vellum-bound book, found a passage in it, and showed it to David Grieve. Canon Aylwin and the Dean pressed in to look, and they all fell back into the recess of a great oriel, talking earnestly.

The others passed on into a conservatory beyond the library, where was a billiard-table, and many nooks for conversation amid the cunning labyrinths of flowers.

Lucy sank into a cane chair, close to a towering mass of arum lilies, and looked back into the library. Nobody in the conservatory had any thought for her. They were absorbed in each other, and a merry game of pyramids had been already organised. So Lucy watched her husband wistfully.

What a beautiful face was that of Canon Aylwin, with whom he was talking! She could not take her eyes from its long, thin outlines, the apostolic white hair, the eager eyes and quivering mouth, contrasting with the patient courtesy of manner. Yet in her present soreness and heat, the saintly charm of the

old man's figure did somehow but depress her the more.

A little after ten it became evident that *nothing* could keep the lady with the white eyelashes out of bed any longer, so the billiard-room party broke up, and, with a few gentlemen in attendance, the ladies streamed into the hall, and possessed themselves of bedroom candlesticks. The great house seemed to be alive with talk and laughter as they strolled upstairs, the girls making dressing-gown appointments in each other's rooms for a quarter of an hour later.

When Lucy reached her own door she stopped awkwardly. Lady Driffield walked on, talking to Marcia Wellesdon. But Marcia looked back:

'Good night, Mrs. Grieve.'

She returned, and pressed Lucy's hand kindly. 'I am afraid you must be tired,' she said; 'you look so.'

Lady Driffield also shook hands, but, with constitutional *gaucherie*, she did not second Mrs. Wellesdon's remark; she stood by silent and stiff.

'Oh, no, thank you,' said Lucy, hurriedly, 'I am quite well.'

When she had disappeared, the other two walked on.

'What a stupid little thing!' said Lady Driffield. 'The husband may be interesting—Driffield says he is—but I defy anybody to get anything out of the wife.'

It occurred to Marcia that nobody had been very anxious to make the attempt. But she only said aloud:

'I'm sure she is very shy. What a pity she wears that kind of dress! She might be quite pretty in something else.'

Meanwhile Lucy, after shutting the outer door of their little suite behind her, was overtaken as she opened that leading to her own room by a sudden gust

of wind coming from a back staircase emerging on to their private passage, which she had not noticed before. The candle was blown out, and she entered the room in complete darkness. She groped for the matches, and found the little stand; but there were none there. She must have used the last in the making of her great illumination before dinner. After much hesitation, she at last summoned up courage to ring the bell, groping her way to it by the help of the light in the passage.

For a long time no one came. Lucy, standing near her own door, seemed to hear two sounds—the angry beating of her own heart, and a murmur of far-off talk and jollity, conveyed to her up the mysterious staircase, which apparently led to some of the servants' quarters.

Fully five minutes passed; then steps were heard approaching, and a housemaid appeared. Lucy timidly asked for fresh matches. The girl said 'Yes, ma'am,' in an off-hand way, looked at Lucy with a somewhat hostile eye, and vanished.

The minutes passed, but no matches were forthcoming. The whirlpool of the lower regions, where the fun was growing uproarious, seemed to have engulfed the messenger. At last Lucy was fain to undress by the help of a glimmer of light from her door left ajar, and after many stumbles and fumbblings at last crept, tired and wounded, into bed. This finale seemed to her of a piece with all the rest.

As she lay there in the dark, incident after incident of her luckless evening coming back upon her, her heart grew hungry for David. Nay, her craving for him mounted to jealousy and passion. After all, though he did get on so much better in grand houses than she did, though they were all kind to him and despised her, he was *hers*, her very own, and no one

should take him from her. Beautiful Mrs. Wellesdon might talk to him and make friends with him, but he did not belong to any of them, but to *her*, Lucy. She pined for the sound of his step—thought of throwing herself into his arms, and seeking consolation there for the pains of an habitual self-importance crushed beyond bearing.

But when that step was actually heard outside, her mind veered in an instant. She had made him come; he would think she had disgraced him; he had probably noticed nothing, for a certain absent-mindedness in society had grown upon him of late years. No, she would hold her peace.

So when David, stepping softly and shading his candle, came in, and called 'Lucy' under his breath to see whether she might be awake, Lucy pretended to be sound asleep. He waited a minute, and then went out to change his coat and go down to the smoking-room.

Poor little Lucy! As she lay there in the dark, the tears dropping slowly on her embroidered pillow, the issue of all her mortification was a new and troubled consciousness about her husband. Why this difference between them? How was it that he commanded from all who knew him either a warm sympathy or an involuntary respect, while she——

She had gathered from some scraps of the talk round him which had reached her that it was just those sides of his life—those quixotic ideal sides—which were an offence and annoyance to her that touched other people's imagination, opened their hearts. And she had worried and teased him all these years! Not since the beginning. For, looking back, she could well remember the days when it was still an intoxication that he should have married her, when she was at once in awe of him and foolishly, proudly,



happy. But there had come a year when David's profits from his business had amounted to over 2,000*l.*, and when, thanks to a large loan pressed upon him by his Unitarian landlord, Mr. Doyle, he had taken the new premises in Prince's Street. And from that moment Lucy's horizon had changed, her ambitions had hardened and narrowed; she had begun to be impatient with her husband, first, that he could not make her rich faster, then, after their Tantalus gleam of wealth, that he would put mysterious and provoking obstacles in the way of their getting rich at all.

She meant to keep awake—to wait for him. But she began to think of Sandy. *He* would be glad to see his 'mummy' again! In fancy she pressed his cheek against her own burning one. He and David were still alive—still hers—it was all right somehow. Consolation began to steal upon her, and in ten minutes she was asleep.

## CHAPTER IV

WHEN David came in later, he took advantage of Lucy's sleep to sit up awhile in his own room. He was excited, and any strong impression, in the practical loneliness of his deepest life, always now produced the impulse to write.

'*Midnight.*—Lucy is asleep. I hope she has been happy and they have been kind to her. I saw Mrs. Wellesdon talking to her after dinner. She must have liked that. But *at* dinner she seemed to be sitting silent a good deal.

'What a strange spectacle is this country-house life to anyone bringing to it a fresh and unaccustomed eye!

"After all," said Mrs. Wellesdon, "you must admit that the best of anything is worth keeping. And in these country houses, with all their drawbacks, you do from time to time get the best of social intercourse, a phase of social life as gay, complex, and highly finished as it can possibly be made."

'Certainly this applies to me to-night. When have I enjoyed any social pleasure so much as my talk with her at dinner? When have I been conscious of such stimulus, such exhilaration, as the evening's discussion produced in me? In the one case, Mrs. Wellesdon taught me what general conversation might be—how nimble, delicate, and pleasure-giving; in the other, there was the joy of the intellectual wrestle, mingled with a glad respect for one's opponents. Perhaps nowhere, except on some such ground and in some such circumstances as these, could a debate so earnest have taken quite so wholesome a tone, so wide a range. We were equals—debaters, not controversialists—friends, not rivals—in the quest for truth.

'Yet what drawbacks! This army of servants—which might be an army of slaves without a single manly right, so mute, impassive, and highly trained it is—the breeding of a tyrannous temper in the men, of a certain contempt for facts and actuality even in the best of the women. Mrs. Wellesdon poured out her social aspirations to me. How naïve and fanciful they were! They do her credit, but they will hardly do anyone else much good. And it is evident that they mark her out in her own circle, that they have brought her easily admiration and respect, so that she has never been led to test them, as any one, with the same social interest, living closer to the average realities and griefs of life, must have been led to test them.

'The culture, too, of these aristocratic women, when

they are cultured, is so curious. Quite unconsciously and innocently it takes itself for much more than it is, merely by contrast with the *milieu*—the *milieu* of material luxury and complication—in which it moves.

‘But I am ungrateful. What a social power in the best sense such a woman might become—a woman so sensitively endowed, so nobly planned!’

David dropped his pen awhile. In the silence of the great house, a silence broken only by the breathings of a rainy autumn wind through the trees outside, his thought took that picture-making intensity which was its peculiar gift. Images of what had been in his own life, and what might have been—the dream of passion which had so deeply marked and modified his manhood—Elise, seen in the clearer light of his richer experience—his married years—the place of the woman in the common life—on these his mind brooded, one by one, till gradually the solemn consciousness of opportunities for ever missed, of failure, of limitation, evoked another, as solemn, but sweeter and more touching, of human lives irrevocably dependent on his, of the pathetic unalterable claim of marriage, the poverty and hopelessness of all self-seeking, the essential wealth, rich and making rich, of all self-spending. As he thought of his wife and son a deep tenderness flooded the man’s whole nature. With a long sigh, it was as though he took them both in his arms, adjusting his strength patiently and gladly to the familiar weight.

Then, by a natural reaction, feeling, to escape itself, passed into speculative reminiscence and meditation of a wholly different kind.

‘Our discussion to-night arose from an attack—if

anyone so gentle can be said to attack—made upon me by Canon Aylwin, on the subject of those “Tracts on the New Testament”—tracts of mine, of which we have published three, while I have two or three more half done in my writing-table drawer. He said, with a certain nervous decision, that he did not wish to discuss the main question, but he would like to ask me, Could anyone be so sure of supposed critical and historical fact as to be clear that he was right in proclaiming it, when the proclamation of it meant the inevitable disturbance in his fellow-men of conceptions whereon their moral life depended? It was certain that he could destroy; it was most uncertain, even to himself, whether he could do anything else, with the best intentions; and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, ought not the certainty of doing a moral mischief to outweigh, with any just and kindly mind, the much feebler and less solid certainty he may imagine himself to have attained with regard to certain matters of history and criticism?

‘It was the old question of the rights of “heresy,” the function of the individual in the long history of thought. We fell into sides: Lord Driffeld and I against the Dean and Canon Aylwin. The Dean did not, indeed, contribute much. He sat with his square powerful head bent forward, throwing in a shrewd comment here and there, mainly on the logical course of the argument. But when we came to the main question, as we inevitably did, he withdrew altogether, though he listened.

“No,” he said, “no. I am not competent. It has not been my line in life. I have found more than enough to tax my strength in the practical administration of the goods of Christ. All such questions I leave, and must leave, to experts, such experts as”—and he mentioned the names of some of the leading

scholars of the English Church—"or as my friend here," and he laid his hand affectionately on Canon Aylwin's knee.

'Strange! He leaves to experts such questions as those of the independence, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the Gospel records; of the culture and idiosyncrasies of the first two centuries as tending to throw light on those records; of the earliest growth of dogma, as, thanks mainly to German labour, it may now be exhibited within the New Testament itself. In a Church of private judgment, he takes all this at second hand, after having vowed at his ordination "to be diligent in such studies as help to the knowledge of the Scriptures"!

'Yet a better, a more God-fearing, a more sincere, and, within certain lines, a more acute man than Dean Manley it would certainly be difficult to find at the present time within the English Church. It is an illustration of the dualism in which so many minds tend to live, divided between two worlds, two standards, two wholly different modes of thought—the one applied to religion even in its intellectual aspect, the other applied to all the rest of existence. Yet—is truth divided?

'To return to Canon Aylwin. I could only meet his reproach, which he had a special right to make, for he has taken the kindest interest in some of the earlier series of our "Workmen's Tracts," by going back to some extent to first principles. I endeavoured to argue the matter on ground more or less common to us both. If both knowledge and morality have only become possible for man by the perpetual action of a Divine spirit on his since the dawn of conscious life; if this action has taken effect in human history, as, broadly speaking, the Canon would admit, through a free and constant struggle of opposites, whether in

the realm of interest or the realm of opinion; and if this struggle, perpetually reconciled, perpetually renewed, is the divinely ordered condition, nay, if you will, the sacred task of human life,—how can the Christian, who clings, above all men, to the victory of the Divine in the human, who, moreover, in the course of his history has affronted and resisted all possible “authorities” but that of conscience—how can he lawfully resent the fullest and largest freedom of speech, employed disinterestedly and in good faith, on the part of his brother man? The truth must win; and it is only through the free life of the spirit that she has hitherto prevailed. So much, at least, the English Churchman must hold.

‘It comes to this: must there be no movement of thought because the individual who lives by custom and convention may at least temporarily suffer? Yet the risks of the individual throughout nature—so far we were agreed—are the correlative of his freedom and responsibility.

“Ah, well,” said the dear old man at last, with a change of expression which went to my heart, so wistful and spiritual it was, “perhaps I have been faithless; perhaps the Christian minister would do better to trust the Lord with His own. But before we leave the subject, let me say, once for all, that I have read all your tracts, and weighed most carefully all that they contain. The matter of them bears on what for me has been the study of many years, and all I can say is that I regard your methods of reasoning as unsound, and your conclusions as wholly false. I have been a literary man from my youth as well as a theologian, and I completely dissent from your literary judgments. I believe that if you had not been already possessed by a hostile philosophy—which will allow no space for miracle and revelation—you would

not have arrived at them. I am old and you are young. Let me bear my testimony while there is time. I have taken a great interest in you and your work."

"He spoke with the most exquisite courtesy and simplicity, his look was dignified and heavenly. I felt like kneeling to ask his blessing, even though he could only give it in the shape of a prayer for my enlightenment.

"But now, alone with conscience, alone with God, how does the matter stand? The challenge of such a life and conviction as Canon Aylwin's is a searching one. It bids one look deep into one's self, it calls one to truth and soberness. What I seem to see is that he and I both approach Christianity with a prepossession, with, as he says, "a philosophy." His is a prepossession in favour of a system of interference from without, by Divine or maleficent powers, for their own ends, with the ordinary sequences of nature—which once covered, one may say, the whole field of human thought and shaped the whole horizon of humanity. From the beginning of history this prepossession—which may be regarded in all its phases as an expression of man's natural impatience to form a working hypothesis of things—has struggled with the "impulse to know." And slowly, irrevocably, from age to age the impulse to know has beaten back the impulse to imagine, has confined the prepossession of faith within narrower and narrower limits, till at last it is even preparing to deny it the guidance of religion, which it has so long claimed. For the impulse of science, justified by the long wrestle of centuries, is becoming itself religious,—and there is a new awe rising on the brow of Knowledge.

"*My* prepossession—but let the personal pronoun be merely understood as attaching me to that band of

thinkers, "of all countries, nations, and languages," whose pupil and creature I am—is simply that of science, of the organised knowledge of the race. It is drawn from the whole of experience, it governs without dispute every department of thought, and without it, in fact, neither Canon Aylwin nor I could think at all.

'Moreover, I humbly believe that I desire the same spiritual goods as he: holiness, the knowledge of God, the hope of immortality. But while for him these things are bound up with the maintenance of the older prepossession, for me there is no such connection at all.

'And again, I seem to see that when this intellect of his, so keen, so richly stored, approaches the special ground of Christian thought, it changes in quality. It becomes wholly subordinate to the affections, to the influences of education and habitual surroundings. Talk to him of Dante, of the influence of the barbarian invasions on the culture and development of Europe, of the Oxford movement, you will find in him an historical sense, a delicate accuracy of perception, a luminous variety of statement, which carry you with him into the very heart of the truth. But discuss with him the critical habits and capacity of those earliest Christian writers, on whose testimony so much of the Christian canon depends—ask him to separate the strata of material in the New Testament, according to their relative historical and ethical value, under the laws which he would himself apply to any other literature in the world—invite him to exclude this as legendary and that as accretion, to distinguish between the original kernel and that which the fancy or the theology of the earliest hearers inevitably added—and you will feel that a complete change has come over the mind. However subtle and precise his arguments



may outwardly look, they are at bottom the arguments of affection, of the special pleader. He has fenced off the first century from the rest of knowledge; has invented for all its products alike special *criteria* and a special perspective. He cannot handle the New Testament in the spirit of science, for he approaches it on his knees. The imaginative habit of a lifetime has decided for him; and you ask of him what is impossible.

“An end must come to scepticism somewhere!” he once said in the course of our talk. “Faith must take her leap—you know as well as I!—if there is to be faith at all.”

‘Yes, but *where*—at what point? Is the clergyman who talks with sincere distress about infidel views of Scripture and preaches against them, while at the same time he could not possibly give an intelligible account of the problem of the Synoptic Gospels as it now presents itself to the best knowledge, or an outline of the case pressed by science for more than half a century with increasing force and success against the historical character of St. John’s Gospel—is he justified in making his ignorance the leaping-point?

‘Yet the upshot of all our talk is that I am restless and oppressed.

‘. . . I sit and think of these nine years since Berkeley and sorrow first laid hold of me. Berkeley rooted in me the conception of mind as the independent antecedent of all experience, and none of the scientific materialism, which so troubles Ancrum that he will ultimately take refuge from it in Catholicism, affects me. But the ethical inadequacy of Berkeley became very soon plain to me. I remember I was going one day through one of the worst slums of An-

coats, when a passage in his examination of the origin of evil occurred to me:

“But we should further consider that the very blemishes and defects of nature are not without their use, in that *they make an agreeable sort of variety*, and augment the beauty of the rest of the creation, as shades in a picture serve to set off the brighter and more enlightened parts.”

‘I had just done my best to save a little timid scarecrow of a child, aged about six, from the blows of its brutal father, who had already given it a black eye—my heart blazed within me,—and from that moment Berkeley had no spell for me.

‘Then came that moment when, after my marriage, haunted as I was by the perpetual oppression of Manchester’s pain and poverty, the Christian mythology, the Christian theory with all its varied and beautiful flowerings in human life, had for a time an attraction for me so strong that Dora naturally hoped everything, and I felt myself becoming day by day more of an orthodox Christian. What checked the tendency I can hardly now remember in detail. It was a converging influence of books and life—no doubt largely helped, with regard to the details of Christian belief, by the pressure of the German historical movement, as I became more and more fully acquainted with it.

‘At any rate, St. Damian’s gradually came to mean nothing to me, though I kept, and keep still, a close working friendship with most of the people there. But I am thankful for that Christian phase. It enabled me to realise as nothing else could the strength of the Christian case.

‘And since then it has been a long and weary journey through many paths of knowledge and philosophy, till of late years the new English phase of Kantian and Hegelian thought, which has been spreading in our

universities, and which is the outlet of men who can neither hand themselves over to authority, like Newman, nor to a scientific materialism, like Clifford and Haeckel, nor to a mere patient nescience in the sphere of metaphysics, like Herbert Spencer, has come to me with an ever-increasing power of healing and edification.

‘That the spiritual principle in nature and man exists and governs; that mind cannot be explained out of anything but itself; that the human consciousness derives from a universal consciousness, and is thereby capable both of knowledge and of goodness; that the phenomena and history of conscience are the highest revelation of God; that we are called to co-operation in a divine work, and in spite of pain and sin may find ground for an infinite trust, covering the riddle of the individual lot, in the history and character of that work in man, so far as it has gone—these things are deeper and deeper realities to me. They govern my life; they give me peace; they breathe to me hope.

‘But the last glow, the certainties, the *vision*, of faith! Ah! me, I believe that He is there, yet my heart gropes in darkness. All that is personality, holiness, compassion in us, must be in Him intensified beyond all thought. Yet I have no familiarity of prayer. I cannot use the religious language which should be mine without a sense of unreality. My heart is athirst.

‘And can religion possibly *depend* upon a long process of thought? How few can think their way to Him—perhaps none, indeed, by the logical intellect alone. He reveals himself to the simple. *Speak to me, to me also, O my Father!*’

Sunday morning broke fresh and golden after a wet

night. Lucy lay still in the early dawn, thinking of the day that had to be faced, feeling more cheerful, however, with the refreshment of sleep, and inclined to hope that she might have got over the worst, and that better things might be in store for her.

So that when David said to her, 'You poor little person, did they eat you up last night—Lady Driffield and her set?' she only answered evasively that Mrs. Wellesdon had been nice, but that Lady Driffield had very bad manners, and she was sure everybody thought so.

To which David heartily assented. Then Lucy put her question:

'Did you think, when you looked at me last night at dinner, that I—that I looked nice?' she said, flushing, yet driven on by an inward smart.

'Of course I did!' David declared. 'Perhaps you should hold yourself up a little more. The women here are so astonishingly straight and tall, like young poplars.'

'Mrs. Wellesdon especially,' Lucy reflected, with a pang.

'But you thought I—had done my hair nicely?' she said, desperately.

'Very! And it was the prettiest hair there!' he said, smoothing back the golden brown curls from her temple.

His compliment so delighted her that she dressed and prepared to descend to breakfast with a light heart. She was not often now so happily susceptible to a word of praise from him; she was more exacting than she had once been, but since her acquaintance with Lady Driffield she had been brought low!

And her evil fortune returned upon her, alas, at breakfast, and throughout the day. Breakfast, indeed, seemed to her a more formidable meal than any. For

people straggled in, and the ultimate arrangement of the table seemed entirely to depend upon the personal attractiveness of individuals, upon whether they annexed or repelled new-comers. Lucy found herself at one time alone and shivering in the close neighbourhood of Lady Driffield, who was entrenched behind the tea-urn, and after giving her guest a finger, had, Lucy believed, spoken once to her, expressing a desire for scones. The meal itself, with its elaborate cakes and meats and fruits, intimidated Lucy even more than the dinner had done. The breach between it and any small housekeeping was more complete. She felt that she was eating like a school-girl; she devoured her toast dry, out of sheer inability to ask for butter; and, sitting for the most part isolated in the unpopular—that is to say, the Lady Driffield—quarter of the table, went generally half-starved.

As for David, he, with Lord Driffield, Mrs. Wellesdon, Lady Alice, Reggie, and Mrs. Shepton for company at the other end, had on the whole an excellent time. There was, however, one uncomfortable moment of friction between him and Colonel Danby, who had strolled in last of all, with the vicious look of a man who has not had the good night to which he considered himself entitled, and must somehow wreak it on the world.

Just before he entered, Lady Driffield, looking round to see that the servants had departed, had languidly started the question: 'Does one talk to one's maid? Do you, Marcia, talk to your maid? How can anyone ever find anything to say to one's maid?'

The topic proved unexpectedly interesting. Both Marcia Wellesdon and Lady Alice declared that their maids were their bosom friends. Lady Driffield shrugged her shoulders, then looked at Mrs. Grieve, who had sat silent, opened her mouth to speak, recol-

lected herself, and said nothing. At that moment Colonel Danby entered.

'I say, Danby!' called the young attaché, Marcia's brother, 'do you talk to your valet?'

'Talk to my valet!' said the Colonel, putting up his eye-glass to look at the dishes on the side table—he spoke with suavity, but there was an ominous pucker in the brow—'what should I do that for? I don't pay the fellow for his conversation, I presume, but to button my boots, and precious badly he does it too. I don't even know what his elegant surname is. "Thomas," or "James," or "William" is enough peg for me to hang my orders on. I generally christen them fresh when they come to me.'

Little Lady Alice looked indignant. Lucy caught her husband's face, and saw it suddenly pale, as it easily did under a quick emotion. He was thinking of the valet he had seen at the station standing by the Danbys' luggage—a dark, anxious-looking man, whose likeness to one of the compositors in his own office—a young fellow for whom he had a particular friendship—had attracted his notice.

'Why do you suppose he puts up with you—your servant?' he said, bending across to Colonel Danby. He smiled a little, but his eyes betrayed him.

'Puts up with me!' Colonel Danby lifted his brows, regarding David with an indescribable air of insolent surprise. 'Because I make it worth his while in pounds, shillings, and pence; that's all.'

And he put down his pheasant *salmi* with a clatter, while his wife handed him bread and other propitiations.

'Probably because he has a mother or sister,' said David, slowly. 'We trust a good deal to the patience of our "masters."'

The Colonel stopped his wife's attentions with an

angry hand. But just as he was about to launch a reply more congruous with his gout and his contempt for 'Driffield's low-life friends' than with the amenities of ordinary society, and while Lady Venetia was slowly and severely studying David through her eye-glass, Lord Driffield threw himself into the breach with a nervous story of some favourite 'man' of his own, and the storm blew over.

Lady Driffield, indeed, who herself disliked Colonel Danby, as one overbearing person dislikes another, and only invited him because Lady Venetia was her cousin and an old friend, was rather pleased with David's outbreak. After breakfast she graciously asked him if she should show him the picture gallery. But David was still seething with wrath, and looked at Vandeveldes and De Hoochs and Rembrandts with a distracted eye. Once, indeed, in a little alcove of the gallery hung with English portraits, he woke to a start of interest.

'Imagine that that should be Gray!' he said, pointing to a picture—well known to him through engraving—of a little man in a bob wig, with a turned-up nose and a button chin, and a general air of eager servility. '*Gray*,—one of our greatest poets!' He stood wondering, feeling it impossible to fit the dignity of Gray's verse to the insignificance of Gray's outer man.

'Oh, Gray—a great poet, you think? I don't agree with you. I have always thought the "Night Thoughts" very dull,' said Lady Driffield, sweeping along to the next picture, in a sublime unconsciousness. David smiled—a flash of mirth that cleared his whole look—and was himself again. Moreover he was soon taken possession of by Lord Driffield, and the two disappeared for a happy morning spent between the library and the woods.

Meanwhile Lucy went to church, and had the bliss of feeling that she made one too many in the omnibus, and that, squeeze herself as small as she might, she was still crushing Miss Danby's new dress—a fact of which both mother and daughter were clearly aware. Looking back upon it, Lucy could not remember that for her there had been any conversation going or coming; but it is quite possible that her memory of Benet's Park was even more pronounced than the reality.

David and Lord Driffield came in when lunch was half over, and afterwards there was a general strolling into the garden.

'Are you all right?' said David to his wife, taking her arm affectionately.

'Oh yes, thank you,' she said hurriedly, perceiving that Reggie Calvert was coming up to her. 'I'm all right. Don't take my arm, David. It looks so odd.'

And she turned delightedly to talk to the young diplomatist, who had the kindness and charm of his race, and devoted himself to her very prettily for a while, though they had great difficulty in finding topics, and he was coming finally to the end of his resources when Lady Driffield announced that 'the carriage would be round in half an hour.'

'Goodness gracious! then I must write some letters first,' he said, with the importance of the budding ambassador, and ran into the house.

The others seemed to melt away—David and Canon Aylwin strolling off together—and soon Lucy found herself alone. She sat down in a seat round which curved a yew hedge, and whence there was a somewhat wide view over a bare, hilly country, with suggestions everywhere of factory life in the hollows, till on the south-west it rose and melted into the Derbyshire moors. Autumn—late autumn—was on all the red-denning woods and in the cool sunshine; but there was



a bright border of sunflowers and dahlias near, which no frost had yet touched, and the gaiety both of the flowers and of the clear blue distance forbade as yet any thought of winter.

Lucy's absent and discontented eye saw neither flowers nor distance; but it was perforce arrested before long by the figure of Mrs. Shepton, who came round the corner of the yew hedge.

'Have they gone?' said that lady.

'Who?' said Lucy, startled. 'I heard a carriage drive off just now, I think.'

'Ah! then they *are* gone. Lady Driffeld has carried off all her friends—except Mrs. Wellesdon, who, I believe, is lying down with a headache—to tea at Sir Wilfrid Herbart's. You see the house there'—and she pointed to a dim, white patch among woods, about five miles off. 'It is not very civil of a hostess, perhaps, to leave her guests in this way. But Lady Driffeld is Lady Driffeld.'

Mrs. Shepton laughed, and threw back the flapping green gauze veil with which she generally shrouded a freckled and serviceable complexion, in no particular danger, one would have thought, of spoiling.

Lucy instinctively looked round to see how near they were to the house, and whether there were any windows open.

'It must be very difficult, I should think, to be—to be friends with Lady Driffeld.'

She looked up at Mrs. Shepton with the childish air of one both hungry for gossip and conscious of the naughtiness of it.

Mrs. Shepton laughed again. She had never seen anyone behave worse, she reflected, than Lady Driffeld to this little Manchester person, who might be uninteresting, but was quite inoffensive.

'Friends! I should think so. An armed neutrality

is all that pays with Lady Driffield. I have been here many times, and I can now keep her in order perfectly. You see, Lady Driffield has a brother whom she happens to be fond of—everybody has some soft place—and this brother is a Liberal member down in our West Riding part of the world. And my husband is the editor of a paper that possesses a great deal of political influence in the brother's constituency. We have backed him up through this election. He is not a bad fellow at all, though about as much of a Liberal at heart as this hedge,' and Mrs. Shepton struck it lightly with the parasol she carried. 'My husband thinks we got him in—by the skin of his teeth. So Lady Driffield asks us periodically, and behaves herself, more or less. My husband likes Lord Driffield. So do I; and an occasional descent upon country houses amuses me. It especially entertains me to make Lady Driffield talk politics.'

'She must be very Conservative,' said Lucy, heartily. Conservatism stood in her mind for the selfish exclusiveness of big people. Her father had always been a bitter Radical.

'Oh dear no—not at all! Lady Driffield believes herself an advanced Liberal; that is the comedy of it. *Liberals!*' cried Mrs. Shepton, with a sudden bitterness, which transformed the broad, plain, sleepy face. 'I should like to set her to work for a year in one of those mills down there. She might have some politics worth having by the end of it.'

Lucy looked at her in amazement. Why, the mill people were very happy—most of them.

'Ah well!' said Mrs. Shepton, recovering herself, 'what we have to do—we intelligent middle class—for the next generation or two, is to *drive* these aristocrats. Then it will be seen what is to be done with them finally. Well, Mrs. Grieve, we must amuse

ourselves. *Au revoir!* My husband has some writing to do, and I must go and help him.'

She waved her hand and disappeared, sweeping her green and yellow skirts behind her with an air as though Benet's Park were already a seminary for the correction of the great.

Lucy sat on pondering till she felt dull and cold, and decided to go in. On finding her way back she passed round a side of the house which she had not yet seen. It was the oldest part of the building, and the windows, which were mullioned and narrow, and at some height from the ground, looked out upon a small bowling-green, closely walled in from the rest of the gardens and the park by a thick screen of trees. She lingered along the path looking at a few late roses which were still blooming in this sheltered spot against the wall of the house, when she was startled by the sound of her own name, and, looking up, she saw that there was an open window above her. The temptation was too great. She held her breath and listened.

'Lord Driffield says he married her when he was quite young, that accounts for it.' Was not the voice Lady Alice's? 'But it is a pity that she is not more equal to him. I never saw a more striking face, did you? Yet Lord Driffield says he is not as good-looking as he promised to be as a boy. I wish we had been there last night after dinner, Marcia! They say he gave Colonel Danby such a dressing about some workmen's question. Colonel Danby was laying down the law about strikes in his usual way—he *is* an odious creature!—and wishing that the Government would just send an infantry regiment into the middle of the Yorkshire miners that are on strike now, when Mr. Grieve fired up. And everybody backed him. Reggie told me it was splendid; he never saw a better

shindy. It is a pity about her. Everybody says he might have a great career if he pleased. And she can't be any companion to him.—Now, Marcia, you know your head *is* better, so don't say it isn't! Why, I have used a whole bottle of eau de Cologne on you.'

So chattered pretty, kindly Lady Alice, sitting with her back to the window beside Marcia Wellesdon. Lucy stood still a moment, could not hear what Mrs. Wellesdon said languidly in answer, then crept on, her lip quivering.

From then till long after the dark had fallen she was quite alone. David, coming back from a long walk, and tea at the agent's house on the further edge of the estate, found his wife lying on her bed, and the stars beginning to look in upon her through the unshuttered windows.

'Why, Lucy! aren't you well, dear?' he said, hurrying up to her.

'Oh yes, very well, thank you,' she said, in a constrained voice. 'My head aches rather.'

'Who has been looking after you?' he said, instantly reproaching himself for the enjoyment of his own afternoon.

'I have been here since three o'clock.'

'And nobody gave you any tea?' he asked, flushing.

'No, I went down, but there was nobody in the drawing-room. I suppose the footman thought nobody was in.'

'Where was Lady Driffield?'

'Oh! she and most of them went out to tea—to a house a good way off.'

Lucy's tone was dreariness itself. David sat still, his breath coming quickly. Then suddenly Lucy turned round and drew him down to her passionately.

'When can we get home? Is there an early train?'

Then David understood. He took her in his arms, and she broke down and cried, sobbing out a catalogue of griefs that was only half coherent. But he saw at once that she had been neglected and slighted, nay more, that she had been somehow wounded to the quick. His clasped hand trembled on his knee. This was hospitality! He had gauged Lady Driffield well.

‘An early train?’ he said, with frowning decision. ‘Yes, of course. There is to be an eight o’clock breakfast for those who want to get off. We shall be home by a little after nine. Cheer up, darling. I will look after you to-night—and think of Sandy to-morrow!’

He laid his cheek tenderly against hers, full of a passion of resentment and pity. As for her, the feeling with which she clung to him was more like the feeling she had first shown him on the Wakely moors, than anything she had known since.

‘Sandy! why don’t you say good morning, sir?’ said David next morning, standing on the threshold of his own study, with Lucy just behind. His face was beaming with the pleasures of home.

Sandy, who was lying curled up in David’s arm-chair, looked sleepily at his parents. His thumb was tightly wedged in his mouth, and with the other he held pressed against him a hideous rag doll, which had been presented to him in his cradle.

‘Jane’s asleep,’ he said, just removing his thumb for the purpose, and then putting it back again.

‘Heartless villain!’ said David, taking possession of both him and Jane. ‘And do you mean to say you aren’t glad to see Daddy and Mammy?’

‘Zes—but Sandy’s so fond of childwen,’ said Sandy, cuddling Jane up complacently, and subsiding into his father’s arms.

Husband and wife laughed into each other's eyes. Then Lucy knelt down to tie the child's shoe, and David, first kissing the boy, bent forward and laid another kiss on the mother's hair.

## CHAPTER V

'An exciting post,' said David to Lucy one morning as she entered the dining-room for breakfast. 'Louie proposes to bring her little girl over to see us, and Ancrum will be home to-night.'

'Louie!' repeated Mrs. Grieve, standing still in her amazement. 'What do you mean?'

It was certainly unexpected. David had not heard from Louie for more than six months; his remittances to her, however, were at all times so casually acknowledged that he had taken no particular notice; and he and she had not met for two years and more—since that visit to Paris, in fact, recorded in his journal.

'It is quite true,' said David; 'it seems to be one of her sudden schemes. I don't see any particular reason for it. She says she must "put matters before" me, and that Cécile wants a change. I don't see that a change to Manchester in February is likely to help the poor child much. No, it must mean more money. We must make up our minds to that,' said David with a little sad smile, looking at his wife.

'David! I don't see that you're called to do it at all!' cried Lucy. 'Why, you've done much more for her than anybody else would have done! What they do with the money I can't think—dreadful people!'

She began to pour out the tea with vehemence and an angry lip. She had always in her mind that vision of Louie, as she had seen her for the first and only

time in her life, marching up Market Place in the 'loud' hat and the black and scarlet dress, stared at and staring. Nor had she ever lost her earliest impression of strong dislike which had come upon her immediately afterwards, when Louie and Reuben had mounted to Dora's sitting-room, and she, Lucy, had angrily told the quick-fingered, bold-eyed girl who claimed to be David Grieve's sister not to touch Dora's work. Nay, every year since had but intensified it, especially since their income had ceased to expand rapidly, and the drain of the Montjoies' allowance had been more plainly felt. She might have begun to feel a little ashamed of herself that she was able to give her husband so little sympathy in his determination to share his gains with his co-workers. She was quite clear that she was right in resenting the wasting of his money on such worthless people as the Montjoies. It was disgusting that they should sponge upon them so—and with hardly a 'thank you' all the time. Oh dear, no!—Louie took everything as her right, and had once abused David through four pages because his cheque had been two days late.

David received his wife's remarks in a meditative silence. He devoted himself a while to Sandy, who was eating porridge at his right hand, and tended with great regularity to bestow on his pinafore what was meant for his mouth. At last he said, pushing the letter over to Lucy:

'You had better read it, Lucy. She talks of coming next week.'

Lucy read it with mounting wrath. It was the outcome of a fit of characteristic violence. Louie declared that she could stand her life no longer; that she was coming over to put things before David; and if he couldn't help her, she and her child would just go out and beg. She understood from an old Man-

chester acquaintance whom she had met in the Rue de Rivoli about Christmas-time that David was doing very well with his business. She wished him joy of it. If he was prosperous, it was more than she was. Nobody ever seemed to trouble their heads about her.

‘Well, I never!’ said Lucy, positively choked. ‘Why, it’s not much more than a month since you sent her that last cheque. And now I know you’ll be saying you can’t afford yourself a new great-coat. It’s disgraceful! They’ll suck you dry, those kind of people, if you let them.’

She had taken no pains so far to curb her language for the sake of her husband’s feelings. But as she gave vent to the last acid phrase she felt a sudden compunction. For David was looking straight before him into vacancy, with a painful intensity in the eyes, and a curious droop and contraction of the mouth. Why did he so often worry himself about Louie? *He* had done all he could, anyway.

She got up and went over to him with his tea. He woke up from his absorption and thanked her.

‘Is it right?’

‘Just right!’ he said, tasting it. ‘All the same, Lucy, it would be really nice of you to be kind to her and poor little Cécile. It won’t be easy for either of us having Louie here.’

He began to cut up his bread with sudden haste, then, pausing again, he went on in a low voice. ‘But if one leaves a task like that undone it makes a sore spot, a fester in the mind.’

She went back to the place in silence.

‘What day is it to be?’ she said presently. Certainly they both looked dejected.

‘The 16th, isn’t it? I wonder who the Manchester acquaintance was. He must have given a rose-



coloured account. We aren't so rich as all that, are we, wife?'

He glanced at her with a charming half-apprehensive smile, which made his face young again. Lucy looked ready to cry.

'I know you'll get out of buying that coat,' she said with energy, as though referring to an already familiar topic of discussion between them.

'No, I won't,' said David cheerfully. 'I'll buy it before Louie comes, if that will please you. Oh, we shall do, dear! I've had a real good turn at the shop this last month. Things will look better this quarter's end, you'll see.'

'Why, I thought you'd been so busy in the printing office,' she said, a good deal cheered, however, by his remark.

'So we have. But John's a brick, and doesn't care how much he does. And the number of men who take a personal interest in the house, who do their utmost to forward work, and to prevent waste and scamping, is growing fast. When once we get the apprentices' school into full working order, we shall see.'

David gave himself a great stretch; and then, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, stood by the fire enjoying it and his dreams together.

'Has it begun?' said Lucy. Her tone was not particularly cordial; but anyone who knew them well would perhaps have reflected that six months before he would have neither made his remark, nor she have asked her question.

'Yes—what?' he said with a start. 'Oh, the school! It has begun tentatively. Six of our best men give in rotation two hours a day to it at the time when work and the machines are slackest. And we have one or two teachers from outside. Twenty-three boys have

entered. I have begun to pay them a penny a day for attendance.'

His face lit up with merriment as though he anticipated her remonstrance.

'David, how foolish! If you coax them like that they won't care a bit about it.'

'Well, the experiment has been tried by a great French firm,' he said, 'and it did well. It is really a slight addition to wages, and pays the firm in the end. You should see the little fellows hustle up for their money. I pay it them every month.'

'And it all comes out of *your* pocket—that, of course, I needn't ask,' said Lucy. But her sarcasm was not bitter, and she had a motherly eye the while to the way in which Sandy was stuffing himself with his bread and jam.

'Well,' he said, laughing and making no attempt to excuse himself, 'but I tell you, madam, you will do better this year. I positively must make some money out of the shop for you and myself too. So I have been going at it like twenty horses, and we've sent out a splendid catalogue.'

'Oh, I say, David!' said Lucy, dismayed, 'you're not going to take the shop-money too to spend on the printing?'

'I won't take anything that will leave you denuded,' he said affectionately; 'and whenever I want anything I'll tell you all about it—if you like.'

He looked at her significantly. She did not answer for a minute, then she said:

'Don't you want me to give those boys a treat some time?'

'Yes, when the weather gets more decent, if it ever does. We must give them a day on the moors—take them to Clough End perhaps. Oh, look here!' he exclaimed with a sudden change of tone, 'let us ask

Uncle Reuben to come and spend the day to see Louie?’

‘Why, he won’t leave *her*,’ said Lucy.

‘Who? Aunt Hannah? Oh yes, he will. It’s wonderful what she can do now. I saw her in November, you remember, when I went to see Margaret. It’s a resurrection. Poor Uncle Reuben!’

‘What do you mean?’ said Lucy, startled.

‘Well,’ said David slowly, with a half tender, half humorous twist of the lip, ‘he can’t understand it. He prayed so many years, and it made no difference. Then came a new doctor, and with electricity and rubbing it was all done. Oh yes, Uncle Reuben would like to see Louie. And I want to show him that boy there!’

He nodded at Sandy, who sat staring open-mouthed and open-eyed at his parents, a large piece of bread and jam slipping slowly down his throat.

‘David, you’re silly,’ said Lucy. But she went to stand by him at the fire, and slipped her hand inside his arm. ‘I suppose she and Cécile had better have the front room,’ she went on slowly.

‘Yes, that would be the most cheerful.’

Then they were silent a little, he leaning his head lightly against hers.

‘Well, I must go,’ he said, rousing himself; ‘I shall just catch the train. Send a line to Ancrum, there’s a dear, to say I will go and see him to-night. Four months! I am afraid he has been very bad.’

Lucy stood by the fire a little, lost in many contradictory feelings. There was in her a strange sense as of some long strain slowly giving way, the quiet melting of some old hardness. Ever since that autumn time when, after their return from Benet’s Park, her husband’s chivalry and delicacy of feeling had given back to her the self-respect and healed the self-love

which had been so rudely hurt, there had been a certain readjustment of Lucy's nature going on below the little commonplaces and vanities and affections of her life which she herself would never have been able to explain. It implied the gradual abandonment of certain ambitions, the relinquishment bit by bit of an arid and fruitless effort.

She would stand and sigh sometimes—long, regretful sighs like a child—for she knew not what. But David would have his way, and it was no good; and she loved him and Sandy.

But she owed no love to Louie Montjoie! It was a relief to her now—an escape from an invading sweetness of which her little heart was almost afraid—to sit down and plan how she would protect David from that grasping woman and her unspeakable husband.

'David, my dear fellow!' said Ancrum's weak voice.

He rose with difficulty from his seat by the fire. The room was the same little lodging-house sitting-room in Mortimer Road, where David years before had poured out his boyish account of himself. Neither chiffonnier, nor pictures, nor antimacassars had changed at all; the bustling landlady was still loud and vigorous. But Ancrum was a shadow.

'You are better?' David said, holding his hand in both his.

'Oh yes, better for a time. Not for long, thank God!'

David looked at him with painful emotion. Several times during these eight years had he seen Ancrum emerge from these mysterious crises of his, a broken and shattered man, whom only the force of a superhuman will could drag back to life and work. But he had never yet seen him so beaten down, so blood-

less, so emaciated as this. Lung mischief had declared itself more than a year before this date, and had clearly made progress during this last attack of melancholia. He thought to himself that his old friend could not have long to live.

‘Has Williams been to see you?’ he asked, naming a doctor whom Ancrum had long known and trusted.

‘Oh yes! He can do nothing. He tells me to give in and go to the south. But there is a little work left in me still. I wanted my boys. I grew to pine for my boys—up there.’

‘Up there’ meant that house in Scotland where lived the friends bound to him by such tragic memories of help asked and rendered in a man’s worst extremity, that he could never speak of them when he was living his ordinary life in Manchester, passionately as he loved them.

They chatted a little about the boys, some of whom David had been keeping an eye on. Five or six of them, indeed, were in his printing-office, and learning in the apprentices’ school he had just started.

But in the middle of their talk, with a sudden change of look, Ancrum stooped forward and laid his hand on David’s.

‘A little more, Davy—I have just to get a *little* worse—and *she* will come to me.’

David was not sure that he understood. Ancrum had only spoken of his wife once since the night when, led on by sympathy and emotion, he had met David’s young confession by the story of his own fate. She was still teaching at Glasgow so far as David knew, where she was liked and respected.

‘Yes, Davy—when I have come to the end of my tether—when I can do no more but die—I shall call—and she will come. It has so far killed us to be together—more than a few hours in the year. But

when life is all over for me—she will be kind—and I shall be able to forget it all. Oh, the hours I have sat here thinking—thinking—and *gnashing my teeth!* My boys think me a kind, gentle, harmless creature, Davy. They little know the passions I have carried within me—passions of hate and bitterness—outcries against God and man. But there has been One with me through the storms—his voice sank—‘aye! and I have gone to Him again and again with the old cry—*Master!—Master!—carest Thou not that we perish?*’

His drawn grey face worked and he mastered himself with difficulty. David held his hand firm and close in a silence which carried with it a love and sympathy not to be expressed.

‘Let me just say this to you, Davy,’ Ancrum went on presently, ‘before we shut the door on this kind of talk—for when a man has got a few things to do and very little strength to do ’em with, he must not waste himself. You may hear any day that I have been received into the Catholic Church, or you may only hear it when I am dying. One way or the other, you *will* hear it. It has been strange to go about all these years among my Unitarian and dissenting friends and to know that this would be the inevitable end of it. I have struggled alone for peace and certainty. I cannot get them for myself. There is an august, and inconceivable possibility which makes my heart stand still when I think of it, that the Catholic Church may verily have them to give, as she says she has. I am weak—I shall submit—I shall throw myself upon her breast at last.’

‘But why not now,’ said David, tenderly, ‘if it would give you comfort?’

Ancrum did not answer at once; he sat rubbing his hands restlessly over the fire.

‘I don’t know—I don’t know,’ he said at last. ‘I

have told you what the end will be, Davy. But the will still flutters—flutters—in my poor breast, like a caged thing.’

Then that beautiful half-wild smile of his lit up the face.

‘Bear with me, you strong man! What have you been doing with yourself? How many more courts have you been pulling down? And how much more of poor Madam Lucy’s money have you been throwing out of window?’

He took up his old tone, half bantering, half affectionate, and teased David out of the history of the last six months. While he sat listening he reflected once more, as he had so often reflected, upon the difference between the reality of David Grieve’s life as it was and his, Ancrum’s, former imaginations of what it would be. A rapid rise to wealth and a new social status, removal to London, a great public career, a personality, and an influence conspicuous in the eyes of England—all these things he had once dreamed of as belonging to the natural order of David’s development. What he had actually witnessed had been the struggle of a hidden life to realise certain ideal aims under conditions of familiar difficulty and limitation, the dying down of that initial brilliance and passion to succeed, into a wrestle of conscience as sensitive as it was profound, as tenacious as it was scrupulous. He had watched an unsatisfactory marriage, had realised the silent resolve of the north-countryman to stand by his own people, of the man sprung from the poor to cling to the poor: he had become familiar with the veins of melancholy by which both character and life were crossed. That glittering prince of circumstance as he had once foreseen him, was still enshrined in memory and fancy; but the real man was knit to the cripple’s inmost heart.

Another observer, perhaps, might have wondered at Ancrum's sense of difference and disillusion. For David after all had made a mark. As he sat talking to Ancrum of the new buildings behind the printing-office where he now employed from two to three hundred men, of the ups and downs of his profit-sharing experiences, of this apprentices' school for the sons of members of the 'house,' imitated from one of the same kind founded by a great French printing firm, and the object just now of a passionate energy of work on David's part—or as he diverged into the history of an important trade dispute in Manchester, where he had been appointed arbitrator by the unanimous voice of both sides—as he told these things, it was not doubtful even for Ancrum that his power and consideration were spreading in his own town.

But, substantially, Ancrum was right. Hard labour and natural gift had secured their harvest; but that vivid personal element in success which captivates and excites the bystander seemed, in David's case, to have been replaced by something austere, which pointed attention and sympathy rather to the man's work than to himself. When he was young there had been intoxication for such a spectator as Ancrum in the magical rapidity and ease with which he seized opportunity and beat down difficulty. Now that he was mature, he was but one patient toiler the more at the eternal puzzles of our humanity.

Ancrum let him talk awhile. He had always felt a certain interest in David's schemes, though they were not of a quality and sort with which a mind like his naturally concerned itself. But his interest now could not hold out so long as once it could.

'Ah, that will do—that will do, dear fellow!' he said, interrupting and touching David's hand with apologetic affection. 'I seem to feel your pulse beat-



ing 150 to the minute, and it tires me so I can't bear myself. Gossip to me. How is Sandy?'

David laughed, and had as usual a new batch of 'Sandiana' to produce. Then he talked of Louie's coming and of the invitation which had been sent to Reuben Grieve.

'I shall come and sit in a corner and look at *her*,' said Ancrum, nodding at Louie's name. 'What sort of a life has she been leading all these years? Neither you nor I can much imagine. But what beauty it used to be! How will John stand seeing her again?'

David smiled, but did not think it would affect John very greatly. He was absorbed in the business of Grieve & Co., and no less round, roseate, and trusty than he had always been.

'Well, good night—good night!' said Ancrum, and seemed to be looking at the clock uneasily. 'Come again, Davy, and I dare say I shall struggle up to you.'

At that moment the door opened, and, in spite of a hasty shout from Ancrum, which she did not or would not understand, Mrs. Elsley, his landlady, came into the room, bearing his supper. She put down the tray, seemed to invite David's attention to it by her indignant look, and flounced out again like one bursting with forbidden speech.

'Ancrum, this is absurd!' cried David, pointing to the tea and morsel of dry bread which were to provide this shrunk invalid with his evening meal. 'You *can't* live on this stuff now, you know—you want something more tempting and more nourishing. Do be rational!'

Ancrum sprang up, hobbled with unusual alacrity across the room, and, laying hold of David, made a feint of ejecting his visitor.

'You get along and leave me to my wittles!' he said

with the smile of a schoolboy; 'I don't spy on you when you're at your meals.'

David crossed his arms.

'I shall have to send Lucy down every morning to housekeep with Mrs. Elsley,' he said firmly.

'Now, David, hold your tongue! I couldn't eat anything else if I tried. And there are two boys down with typhoid in Friar's Yard—drat 'em!—and scarcely a rag on 'em: don't you understand? And besides, David, if *she* comes, I shall want a pound or two, you see?'

He did not look at his visitor's face nor let his own be seen. He simply pushed David through the door and shut it.

'Sandy, they're just come!' cried Lucy in some excitement, hugging the child to her by way of a last pleasant experience before the advent of her sister-in-law. Then she put the child down on the sofa and went out to meet the new-comers.

Sandy sucked a meditative thumb, putting his face to the window, and surveyed the arrival which was going on in the front garden. There was a great deal of noise and talking; the lady in the grey cloak was scolding the cabman, and 'Daddy' was taking her bags and parcels from her, and trying to make her come in. On the steps stood a little girl looking frightened and tired. Sandy twisted his head round and studied her carefully. But he showed no signs of running out to meet her. She might be nice, or she might be nasty. Sandy had a cautious philosophical way with him towards novelties. He remained perfectly still with his cheek pressed against the glass.

The door opened. In came Louie, with Lucy looking already flushed and angry behind her, and David, last of all, holding Cécile by the hand.

Louie was in the midst of denunciations of the cabman, who had, according to her, absorbed into his system, or handed over to an accomplice on the way, a bandbox which had *certainly* been put in at St. Pancras, and which contained Cécile's best hat. She was red and furious, and David felt himself as much attacked as the cabman, for to the best of his ability he had transferred them and their packages, at the Midland station, from the train to the cab.

In the midst of her tirade, however, she suddenly stopped short and looked round the room she had just entered—Lucy's low comfortable sitting-room, with David's books overflowing into every nook and corner, the tea-table spread, and the big fire which Lucy had been nervously feeding during her time of waiting for the travellers.

'Well, you've got a fire, anyway,' she said, brusquely. 'I thought you'd have a bigger house than this by now.'

'Oh, thank you, it's quite big enough!' cried Lucy, going to the tea-table and holding herself very straight. '*Quite* big enough for anything *we* want! Will you take your tea?'

Louie threw herself into an armchair and looked about her.

'Where's the little boy?' she inquired.

'I'm here,' said a small solemn voice from behind the sofa, 'but I'm not *your* boy.'

And Sandy, discovered with his back to the window, replaced the thumb which he had removed to make the remark, and went on staring with portentous gravity at the new-comers. Cécile had nervously disengaged herself from David and was standing by her mother.

'Why, he's small for his age!' exclaimed Louie; 'I'm sure he's small for his age. Why, he's nearly five!'

'Come here, Sandy,' said David, 'and let your aunt and cousin look at you.'

Sandy reluctantly sidled across the room so as to keep as far as possible from his aunt and cousin, and fastened on his father's hand. He and the little girl looked at one another.

'Go and kiss her,' said David.

Sandy most unwillingly allowed himself to be put forward. Cécile with a little patronising woman-of-the-world air stooped and kissed him first on one cheek and then on the other. Louie only looked at him. Her black eyes—no less marvellous than of yore, although now the brilliancy of them owed something to art as well as nature, as Lucy at once perceived—stared him up and down, taking stock minutely.

'He's well made,' she said grudgingly, 'and his colour isn't bad. Cécile, take your hat off.'

The child obeyed, and the mother with hasty fingers pulled her hair forward here, and put it back there. 'Look at the thickness of it,' she said, proudly pointing it out to David. 'They'd have given me two guineas for it in the Rue de la Paix the other day. Why didn't that child have your hair, I wonder?' she added, nodding towards Sandy.

'Because he preferred his mother's, I suppose,' said David, smiling at Lucy, and wondering through his discomfort what Sandy could possibly be doing with his coat-tail. He seemed to be elaborately scrubbing his face with it.

'What are you doing with my coat, villain?' he said, lifting his son in his arms.

Sandy found his father's ear, and with infinite precaution whispered vindictively into it:

'I've wiped *them* kisses off anyhow.'

David suppressed him, and devoted himself to the travellers and their tea.

Every now and then he took a quiet look at his sister. Louie was in some ways more beautiful than ever. She carried herself magnificently, and as she sat at the tea-table—restless always—she fell unconsciously into one fine attitude after another, no doubt because of her long practice as a sculptor's model. All the girl's awkwardness had disappeared; she had the insolent ease which goes with tried and conscious power. But with the angularity and thinness of first youth had gone also that wild and startling radiance which Montjoie had caught and fixed in the Mænad statue—the one enduring work of a ruined talent, now to be found in the Luxembourg by anyone who cares to look for it. Her beauty was less original; it had taken throughout the second-rate Parisian stamp; she had the townswoman's pallor, as compared with the moorland red and white of her youth; and round the eyes and mouth in a full daylight were already to be seen the lines which grave the history of passionate and selfish living.

But if her beauty was less original, it was infinitely more finished. Lucy beside her stumbled among the cups, and grew more and more self-conscious; she had felt much the same at Benet's Park beside Lady Venetia Danby; only here there was a strong personal animosity and disapproval fighting with the disagreeable sense of being outshone.

She left almost all the talk to her husband, and employed herself in looking after Cécile. David, who had left his work with difficulty to meet his sister, did his best to keep her going on indifferent subjects, wondering the while what it was that she had come all this way to say to him, and perfectly aware that her sharp eyes were in every place, taking a depreciatory inventory of his property, his household, and his circumstances.

Suddenly Louie said something to Cécile in violent French. It was to the effect that she was to hold herself up and not stoop like an idiot.

The child, who was shyly eating her tea, flushed all over, and drew herself up with painful alacrity. Louie went on with a loud account of the civility shown her by some gentlemen on the Paris boat and on the journey from Dover. In the middle of it she stopped short, her eye flamed, she bent forward with a rapidity of a cat that springs, and slapped Cécile smartly on the right cheek.

‘I was watching you!’ she cried. ‘Are you never going to obey me—do you think I am going to drag a hunchback about with me?’

Both David and Lucy started forward. Cécile dropped her bread and butter and began to cry in a loud, shrill voice, hitting out meanwhile at her mother with her tiny hands in a frenzy of rage and fear. Sandy, frightened out of his wits, set up a loud howl also, till his mother caught him up and carried him away.

‘Louie, the child is tired out!’ said David, trying to quiet Cécile and dry her tears. ‘What was that for?’

Louie’s chest heaved.

‘Because she won’t do what I tell her,’ she said fiercely. ‘What am I to do with her when she grows up? Who’ll ever look at her twice?’

She scowled at the child who had taken refuge on David’s knee, then with a sudden change of expression she held out her arms, and said imperiously:

‘Give her to me.’

David relinquished her, and the mother took the little trembling creature on her knee.

‘Be quiet then,’ she said to her roughly, always in French, ‘I didn’t hurt you. There! *Veux-tu du gâteau?*’

She cut some with eager fingers and held it to

Cécile's lips. The child turned away, silently refusing it, the tears rolling down her cheeks. The mother devoured her with eyes of remorse and adoration, while her face was still red with anger.

'*Dis-moi*, you don't feel anything?' she said, kissing her hungrily. 'Are you tired? Shall I carry you upstairs and put you on the bed to rest?'

And she did carry her up, not allowing David to touch her. When they were at last safe in their own room, David came down to his study and threw himself into his chair in the dark with a groan.

## CHAPTER VI

LOUIE and her child entered the sitting-room together when the bell rang for supper-tea. Louie had put on a high red silk dress of a brilliant, almost scarlet, tone, which showed her arms from the elbows and was very slightly clouded here and there with black; Cécile crept beside her, a little pale shadow, in a white muslin frock, adorned, however, as Lucy's vigilant eyes immediately perceived, with some very dainty and expensive embroidery. The mother's dress reminded her of that in which she first saw Louie Grieve; so did her splendid and reckless carriage; so did the wild play of her black eyes, always on the watch for opportunities of explosion and offence. How did they get their dresses? Who paid for them? And now they had come over to beg for more! Lucy could hardly keep a civil tongue in her head at all, as her sister-in-law swept round the room making strong and, to the mistress of the house, cutting remarks on the difference between 'Manchester dirt' and the brightness and cleanliness of Paris. Why,

she lorded it over them as though the place belonged to her! 'And she is just a pauper—living on what we give her!' thought Lucy to herself with exasperation.

After supper, at which Louie behaved with the same indefinable insolence—whether as regarded the food or the china, or the shaky moderator lamp, a relic from David's earliest bachelor days, which only he could coax into satisfactory burning—Lucy made the move, and said to her with cold constraint:

'Will you come into the drawing-room?—David has a pipe in the study after dinner.'

'I want to speak to David,' said Louie, pushing back her chair with noisy decision. 'I'll go with him. He can smoke as much as he likes—I'm used to it.'

'Well, then, come into my study,' said David, trying to speak cheerfully. 'Lucy will look after Cécile.'

To Louie's evident triumph Cécile made difficulties about going with her aunt, but was at last persuaded by the prospect of seeing Sandy in bed. She had already shown signs in her curious frightened way of a considerable interest in Sandy.

Then David led the way to the study. He put his sister into his armchair and stood pipe in hand beside her, looking down upon her. In his heart there was the passionate self-accusing sense that he could not feel pity, or affection, or remorse for the past when she was there; every look and word roused in him the old irritation, the old wish to master her, he had known so often in his youth. Yet he drew himself together, striving to do his best.

'Well, now, look here,' said Louie defiantly, 'I want some money.'

'So I supposed,' he said quietly, lighting his pipe. Louie reddened.

'Well, and if I do want it,' she said, breathing



quickly, 'I've a right to want it. You chose to waste all that money—all my money—on that marrying business, and you must take the consequence. I look upon it this way—you promised to put my money into your trade and give me a fair share of your profits. Then you chucked it away—you made me spend it all, and now, of course, I'm to have nothing to say to your profits. Oh dear, no! It's a trifle that I'm a pauper and you're rolling in money compared to me anyway. Oh! it doesn't matter nothing to nobody—not at all! All the same you couldn't have made the start you did—not those few months I was with you—without my money. Why can't you confess it, I want to know—and behave more handsome to me now—instead of leaving me in that state that I haven't a franc to bless myself with!'

She threw herself back in her chair, with one arm flung behind her head. David stared at her tongue-tied for a while by sheer amazement.

'I gave you everything I had,' he said, at last, with a slow distinctness, 'all your money, and all my own too. When I came back here, I had my new stock, it is true, but it was much of it unpaid for. My first struggle was to get my neck out of debt.'

He paused, shrinking with a kind of sick repulsion from the memory of that bygone year of shattered nerves and anguished effort. Deliberately he let thought and speech of it drop. Louie was the last person in the world to whom he could talk of it.

'I built up my business again,' he resumed, 'by degrees. Mr. Doyle lent me money—it was on that capital I first began to thrive. From the very beginning, even in the very year when I handed over to you all our father's money—I sent you more. And every year since—you know as well as I do—'

But again he looked away and paused. Once more he felt himself on a wrong tack. What was the use of laying out, so to speak, all that he had done in the sight of these angry eyes? Besides, a certain high pride restrained him.

Louie looked a trifle disconcerted, and her flush deepened. Her audacious attempt to put him in the wrong and provide herself with a grievance could not be carried on. She took refuge in passion.

'Oh, I dare say you think you've done a precious lot!' she said, sitting straight up and locking her hands round her knee, while the whole frame of her stiffened and quivered. 'I suppose you think other people would think so too. *I* don't care! It don't matter to me. You're the only belonging I've got—who else was there for me to look to? Oh, it is all very fine! All I know is, I can't stand my life any more! If you can't do anything, I'll just pack up my traps and go. *Somebody* 'll have to make it easier for me, that's all! Last week—I was out of the house—he found out where I kept my money, he broke the lock open, and when I got home there was nothing. *Nothing*, I tell you!' Her voice rose to a shrillness that made David look to see that the door between them and Lucy was securely closed. 'And I'd promised a whole lot of things to the church for Easter, and Cécile and I haven't got a rag between us; and as for the rent, the landlord may whistle for it! Oh! the beast!' she said, between her teeth, while the fierce tears stood in her eyes.

Lucy—any woman of normal shrewdness, putting two and two together—would have allowed these complaints about half their claimed weight. Upon David—unconsciously inclined to measure all emotion by his own standard—they produced an immediate and deep impression.

'You poor thing!' he murmured, as he stood looking down upon her.

She tossed her head, as though resenting his compassion.

'Yes, I'm about tired of it! I thought I'd come over and tell you that. Now you know,—and if you hear things you don't like, don't blame me, that's all!'

Her great eyes blazed into his. He understood her. Her child—the priests—had, so far, restrained her. Now—what strange mixture of shameless impulse—curiosity, greed, reckless despair—had driven her here that she might threaten him thus!

'Ah, I dare say you think I've had a gay life of it over there with your money,' she went on, not allowing him to speak. '*My God!*'

She shrugged her shoulders, with a scornful laugh, while the tempest gathered within her.

'Don't I know perfectly that for years I have been one of the most beautiful women in Paris! Ask the men who have painted me for the Salon—ask that brute who might have made a fortune out of me if he hadn't been the sot he is! And what have I got by it? What do other women who are not a tenth part as good-looking as I am get by it? A comfortable life, anyway! *Eh bien! essayons!—nous aussi.*'

The look she flung at him choked the words on his lips.

'When I think of these ten years,' she cried, 'I just wonder at myself. There,—what you think about it I don't know, and I don't care. I might have had a good time, and I've had a *devil's* time. And, upon my word, I think I'll make a change!'

In her wild excitement she sprang up and began to pace the narrow room.

David watched her, fighting with himself, and with that inbred antipathy of temperament which seemed to paralyse both will and judgment. Was the secret

of it that in their profound unlikeness they were yet so much alike?

Then he went up to her and made her sit down again.

'Let me have a word now,' he said quietly, though his hand as it gripped hers had a force of which he was unconscious. 'You say you wonder at yourself. Well, I can tell you this: other people have wondered too! When I left you in Paris ten years ago, I tell you frankly, I had no hopes. I said to myself—don't rage at me!—with that way of looking at things, and with such a husband, what chance is there? And for some years now, Louie, I confess to you, I have been simply humbled and amazed to see what—what'—his voice sank and shook—'*love—and the fear of God*—can do. It has been hard to be miserable and poor—I know that—but you have cared for Cécile, and you have feared to shut yourself out from good people who spoke to you in God's name. Don't do yourself injustice. Believe in yourself. Look back upon these years and be thankful. With all their miseries they have been a kind of victory! Will you throw them away *now*? But your child is growing up and will understand. And there are hands to help—mine, always—always.'

He held out his to her, smiling. He could not have analysed his own impulse—this strange impulse which had led him to bless instead of cursing. But its effect upon Louie was startling. She had looked for, perhaps in her fighting mood she had ardently desired, an outburst of condemnation, against which her mad pleasure in the sound of her own woes and hatreds might once more spend itself. And instead of blaming and reproaching he had—

She stared at him. Then with a sudden giving way, which was a matter partly of nerves and partly of surprise, she let her two arms fall upon the edge of

the chair, and dropping her head upon them, burst out into wild sobbing.

His own eyes were wet. He soothed her hurriedly and incoherently, told her he would spare her all the money he could; that he and Lucy would do their best, but that she must not suppose they were very rich. He did not regard all his money as his own.

He went on to explain to her something of his business position. Her sobbing slackened and ceased. And presently, his mood changing instinctively with hers, he became more vague and cautious in statement; his tone veered back towards that which he was accustomed to use to her. For, once her burst of passion over, he felt immediately that she was once more criticising everything that he said and did in her own interest.

'Oh, I know you've become a regular Communist,' she said sullenly at last, drying her eyes in haste. 'Well, I tell you, I must have a hundred pounds. I can't do with a penny less than that.'

He tried to get out of her for what precise purposes she wanted it, and whether her husband had stolen from her the whole of the quarter's allowance he had just sent her. She answered evasively; he felt that she was telling him falsehoods; and once more his heart grew dry within him.

'Well,' he said at last with a certain decision, 'I will do it if I can, and I think I can do it. But, Louie, understand that I have got Lucy and the child to think for, that I am not alone.'

'I should think *she* had got more than she could expect!' cried Louie, putting her hair straight with trembling hands.

His cheek flushed at the sneer, but before he could reply she said abruptly:

'Have you ever told her about Paris?'

'No,' he said, with equal abruptness, his mouth taking a stern line, 'and unless I am forced to do so I never shall. That you understand, I know, for I spoke to you about it in Paris. My past died for me when I asked Lucy to be my wife. I do not ask you to remember this. I take it for granted.'

'I saw that woman the other day,' said Louie with a strange smile, as she sat staring into the fire.

He started, but he did not reply. He went to straighten some papers on his table. It seemed to him that he did not want her to say a word more, and yet he listened for it.

'I remember they used to call her pretty,' said Louie, a hateful scorn shining in her still reddened eyes. 'She is just a little frump now—nobody would ever look at her twice. They say her husband leads her a life. He poisoned himself at an operation and has gone half crippled. She has to keep them both. She doesn't give herself the airs she used to, anyway.'

David could bear it no longer.

'I think you had better go and take Cécile to bed,' he said peremptorily. 'I heard it strike nine a few minutes ago. I will go and talk business to Lucy.'

She went with a careless air. As he saw her shut the door his heart felt once more dead and heavy. A few minutes before there had been the flutter of a divine presence between them. Now he felt nothing but the iron grip of character and life. And that little picture which her last words had left upon the mind—it carried with it a shock and dreariness he could only escape by hard work, that best medicine of the soul. He went out early next morning to his printing-office, spent himself passionately upon a day of difficulties, and came back refreshed.

For the rest, he talked to Lucy, and with great diffi-

culty persuaded her in the matter of the hundred pounds. Lucy's indignation may be taken for granted, and the angry proofs she heaped on David that Louie was an extravagant story-telling hussy, who spent everything she could get on dress and personal luxury.

'Why, her dressing-table is like a perfumer's shop!' she cried in her wrath; 'what she does with all the messes I can't imagine—makes herself beautiful, I suppose! Why should we pay for it all? And I tell you she has got a necklace of real pearls. I know they are real, for she told Lizzie' (Lizzie was the boy's nurse) 'that she always took them about with her to keep them safe out of her husband's clutches—just imagine her talking to the girl like that! When will you be able to give *me* real pearls, and where do you suppose she got them?'

David preferred not to inquire. What could he do, he asked himself in despair—what even could he know, unless Louie chose that he should know it? But she, on the contrary, carefully avoided the least recurrence to the threats of her first talk with him.

Ultimately, however, he brought his wife round, and Louie was informed that she could have her hundred pounds, which should be paid her on the day of her departure, but that nothing more, beyond her allowance, could or should be given her during the current year.

She took the promise very coolly, but certainly made herself more agreeable after it was given. She dressed up Cécile and set her dancing in the evenings, weird dances of a Spanish type, alternating between languor and a sort of 'possession,' which had been taught the child by a moustached violinist from Madrid, who admired her mother and paid Louie a fantastic and stormy homage through her child. She also condescended to take an interest in Lucy's ward-

robe. The mingled temper and avidity with which Lucy received her advances may be imagined. It made her mad to have it constantly implied that her gowns and bonnets would not be worn by a maid-of-all-work in Paris. At the same time, when Louie's fingers had been busy with them it was as plain to her as to anyone else that they became her twice as well as they had before. So she submitted to be pinned and pulled about and tried on, keeping as much as possible on her dignity all the time, and reddening with fresh wrath each time that Louie made it plain to her that she thought her sister-in-law a provincial little fool, and was only troubling herself about her to pass the time.

Dora, of course, came up to see Louie, and Louie was much more communicative to her than to either Lucy or David. She told stories of her husband which made Dora's hair stand on end; but she boasted in great detail of her friendships with certain Legitimist ladies of the bluest blood, with one of whom she had just held a *quête* for some Catholic object on the stairs of the Salon. 'I was in blue and pink with a little silver,' she said, looking quickly behind her to see that Lucy was not listening. 'And Cécile was a fairy, with spangled wings—the sweetest thing you ever saw. We were both in the illustrated papers the week after, but as nobody took any notice of Madame de C—— she has behaved like a washerwoman to me ever since. As if I could help her complexion or her age!'

But above all did she boast herself against Dora in Church matters. She would go to St. Damian's on Sunday, triumphantly announcing that she should have to confess it as a sin when she got home, and afterwards, when Dora, as her custom was, came out to early dinner with the Grieves, Louie could not con-



tain herself on the subject of the dresses, the processions, the decorations, the flowers, and ceremonial trappings in general, with which *she* might, if she liked, regale herself either at Ste. Eulalie or the Madeleine, in comparison with the wretched show offered by St. Damian's. Dora, after an early service and much Sunday school, sat looking pale and weary under the scornful information poured out upon her. She was outraged by Louie's tone; yet she was stung by her contempt. Once her gentleness was roused to speech, and she endeavoured to give some of the reasons for rejecting the usurped authority of the 'Bishop of Rome,' in which she had been drilled at different times. But she floundered and came to grief. Her adversary laughed at her, and in the intervals of rating Cécile for having inked her dress, flaunted some shrill controversy which left them all staring. Louie vindicating the claims of the Holy See with much unction and an appropriate diction! It seemed to David, as he listened, that the irony of life could hardly be carried further.

On the following day, David, not without a certain consciousness, said to John Dalby, his faithful helper through many years, and of late his partner:

'My sister is up at our place, John, with her little girl. Lucy would be very glad if you would go in this evening to see them.'

John, who was already aware of the advent of Madame Montjoie, accepted the invitation and went. Louie received him with a manner half mocking—half patronising—and made no effort whatever to be agreeable to him. She was preoccupied; and the stout, shy man in his new suit only bored her. As for him, he sat and watched her; his small, amazed eyes took in her ways with Cécile, alternately boastful and tyrannical; her airs towards Lucy; her complete

indifference to her brother's life and interests. When he got up to go, he took leave of her with all the old timid *gaucherie*. But if, when he entered the room, there had been anything left in his mind of the old dream, he was a wholly free man when he recrossed the threshold. He walked home thinking much of a small solicitor's daughter, who worshipped at the Congregational chapel he himself attended. He had been at David Grieve's side all these years; he loved him probably more than he would now love any woman; he devoted himself with ardour to the printing and selling of the various heretical works and newspapers published by Grieve & Co.; and yet for some long time past he had been—and was likely to remain—a man of strong religious convictions, of a common Evangelical type.

The second week of Louie's stay was a much greater trial than the first to all concerned. She grew tired of dressing and patronising Lucy; her sharp eyes and tongue found out all her sister-in-law's weak points; the two children were a fruitful source of jarring and jealousy between the mothers; and by the end of the week their relation was so much strained, and David had so much difficulty in keeping the peace, that he could only pine for the Monday morning which was to see Louie's departure. Meanwhile nothing occurred to give him back his momentary hold upon her. She took great care not to be alone with him. It was as though she felt the presence of a new force in him, and would give it no chance of affecting her in mysterious and incalculable ways.

On the Saturday before her last Sunday, Reuben Grieve arrived in Manchester—with his wife. His nephew's letter and invitation had thrown the old man into a great flutter. Ultimately his curiosity as to David's home and child—David himself he had seen

several times since the marriage—and the desire, which the more prosperous state of his own circumstances allowed him to feel, to see what Louie might be like after all these years—decided him to go. And when he told Hannah of his intended journey, he found, to his amazement, that she was minded to go too. ‘If yo’ll tell me when yo gan me a jaunt last, I’ll be obliged to yo!’ she said sourly, and he at once felt himself a selfish brute that he should have thought of taking the little pleasure without her.

When they were seated in the railway-carriage, he broke out in a sudden excitement:

‘Wal, I never thowt, Hannah, to see yo do thissens naw moor!’

‘Aye, yo wor allus yan to mak t’ warst o’ things,’ she said to him, as she slowly settled herself in her corner.

Nevertheless, Reuben’s feeling was amply justified. It had been a resurrection. The clever young doctor, brimful of new methods, who had brought her round, had arrived just in time to stop the process of physical deterioration before it had gone too far; and the recovery of power both on the paralysed side and in general health had been marvellous. She walked with a stick, and was an old and blanced woman before her time. But her indomitable spirit was once more provided with its necessary means of expression. She was at least as rude as ever, and it was as clear as anything can be in the case of a woman who has never learnt to smile, that her visit to Manchester—the first for ten years—was an excitement and satisfaction to her.

David met them at the station; but Reuben persisted in going to an old-fashioned eating-house in the centre of the city, where he had been accustomed to stay on the occasion of his rare visits to Manchester, in spite of his nephew’s repeated offers of hospitality.

'Noa, Davy, noa,' he said, 'yo're a gen'leman now, and yo conno' be moidered wi' oos. We'st coom an see yo—thank yo kindly,—bit we'st do for oursels i' th' sleepin' way.'

To which Hannah gave a grim and energetic assent.

When Louie had been told of their expected arrival she opened her black eyes to their very widest extent.

'Well, you'd better keep Aunt Hannah and me out of each other's way,' she remarked briefly. 'I shall let her have it, you'll see. I'm bound to.' A remark that David did his best to forget, seeing that the encounter was now past averting.

When on Sunday afternoon the door of the Grieves's sitting-room opened to admit Hannah and Reuben Grieve, Louie was lying half asleep in an armchair by the fire, Cécile and Sandy were playing with bricks in the middle of the floor, and Dora and Lucy were chatting on the sofa.

Lucy, who had seen Reuben before, but had never set eyes on Hannah, sprang up ill at ease and awkward, but genuinely anxious to behave nicely to her husband's relations.

'Won't you take a chair? I'll go and call David. He's in the next room. This is Miss Lomax. Louie!'

Startled by the somewhat sharp call, Louie sat up and rubbed her eyes.

Hannah, resting on her stick, was standing in the middle of the floor. At sight of the familiar tyrannous face, grown parchment-white in place of its old grey hue—of the tall gaunt figure robed in the Sunday garb of rusty black which Louie perfectly remembered, and surmounted by the old head-gear—the stiff frizzled curls held in place by two small combs on the temples, the black bandeau across the front of the

head, and the towering bonnet—Louie suddenly flushed and rose.

‘How do you do?’ she said in a cool off-hand way, holding out her hand, which Hannah’s black cotton glove barely touched. ‘Well, Uncle Reuben, do you think I’m grown? I have had about time to, anyway, since you saw me. That’s my little girl.’

With a patronising smile she pushed forward Cécile. The short-sighted tremulous Reuben, staring uncomfortably about him at the town splendours in which ‘Davy’ lived, had to have the child’s hand put into his by Dora before he could pull himself together enough to respond.

‘I’m glad to see tha, my little dear,’ he said, awkwardly dropping his hat and umbrella, as he stooped to salute her. ‘I’m sure yo’re varra kind, miss’—this was said apologetically to Dora, who had picked up his belongings and put them on a chair. ‘Wal, Louie, she doan’t feature her mither mich, as I can see.’

He looked hurriedly at his wife for confirmation. Hannah, who had seated herself on the highest and plainest chair she could find, stared the child up and down, and then slowly removed her eyes, saying nothing. Instantly her manner woke the old rage in Louie, who was observing her excitedly.

‘Come here to me, Cécile. I’d be sorry, anyway, if you were like what your mother was at your age. You’d be a poor, ill-treated, half-starved little wretch if you were!’

Hannah started, but not unpleasantly. Her grim mouth curved with a sort of satisfaction. It was many years since she had enjoyed those opportunities for battle which Louie’s tempers had once so freely afforded her.

‘She’s nobbut a midge,’ she remarked audibly to

Dora, who had just tried to propitiate her by a footstool. 'The chilt looks as thoo she'd been fed on spiders or frogs, or summat o' that soart.'

At this moment David came in, just in time to prevent another explosion from Louie. He was genuinely glad to see his guests; his feeling of kinship was much stronger now than it ever had been in his youth; and in these years of independent, and on the whole happy, living he had had time to forget even Hannah's enormities.

'Well, have you got a comfortable inn?' he asked Reuben presently, when some preliminaries were over.

'I thank yo kindly, Davy,' said Reuben cautiously, 'we're meeterly weel sarved; bit yo conno look for mich fro teawn folk.'

'What are yo allus so mealy-mouthed for?' said his wife indignantly. 'Why conno yo say reet out at it's a pleace not fit for ony decent dog to put his head in, an' an ill-mannert daggle-tail of a woman to keep it, as I'd like to sweep out wi th' bits of a morning, an' leave her on th' muck-heap wheer she belongs?'

David laughed. To an ear long accustomed to the monotony of town civilities there was a not unwelcome savour of the moors even in these brutalities of Hannah's.

'Sandy, where are you?' he said, looking round. 'Have you had a look at him, Aunt Hannah?'

Sandy, who was sitting in the midst of his bricks sucking his thumb patiently till Cécile should be given back to him by her mother, and these invaders should be somehow dispersed, looked up and gave his father a sleepy and significant nod, as much as to say, 'Leave me alone, and turn these people out.'

But David lifted him up, and carried him off for exhibition.

Hannah looked at him, as he lay lazily back on his

father's arm, his fair curls straying over David's coat, his cheek flushed by the heat. 'Aye, he's a gradely little chap,' she said, more graciously it seemed to David than he ever remembered to have heard Hannah Grieve speak before. His paternal vanity was instantly delighted.

'Sit up, Sandy, and tell your great-uncle and aunt about the fine games you've been having with your cousin.'

But Sandy was lost in quite other reflections. He looked out upon Hannah and Reuben with grave filmy eyes, as though from a vast distance, and said absently:

'Daddy!'

'Yes, Sandy, speak up.'

'Daddy, when everybody in the world was babies, who put 'em to bed?'

The child spoke as usual with a slow flute-like articulation, so that every word could be heard. Reuben and Hannah turned and looked at each other.

'Lord alive!' cried Hannah, 'whativer put sich notions into th' chilt's yed?'

David, with a happy twinkle in his eye, held up a hand for silence.

'I don't know, Sandy; give it up.'

Sandy considered a second or two, then said, with the sigh of one who relinquishes speculation in favour of the conventional solution:

'I s'pose God did.'

His tone was dejected, as though he would gladly have come to another conclusion if he could.

'Reuben,' said Hannah with severity, 'hand me that sugar-stick.'

Reuben groped in his pockets for the barley-sugar, which, in spite of Hannah's scoffs, he had bought in Market Street the evening before, 'for t' childer.' He watched his wife in gaping astonishment as he saw her

approaching Sandy, with blandishments which, rough and clumsy as they were, had nevertheless the effect of beguiling that young man on to the lap where barley-sugar was to be had. Hannah fed him triumphantly, making loud remarks on his beauty and cleverness.

Meanwhile Louie stood on the other side of the fire, holding Cécile close against her, with a tight defiant grip—her lip twitching contemptuously. David, always sensitively alive to her presence and her moods, insisted in the midst of Sandy's feast that Cécile should have her share. Sandy held out the barley-sugar, following it with wistful eyes. Louie beat down Cécile's grasping hand. 'You shan't spoil your tea—you'll be sick with that stuff!' she said imperiously. Hannah turned, and brought a slow venomous scrutiny to bear upon her niece—on the slim tall figure in the elegant Parisian dress, the daintily curled and frizzled head, the wild angry eyes. Then she withdrew her glance, contented. Louie's evident jealousy appeased her. She had come to Manchester with one fixed determination—not to be 'talked foine to by that hizzy.'

At this juncture tea made its appearance, Lucy having some time ago given up the sit-down tea in the dining-room, which was the natural custom of her class, as not genteel. She seated herself nervously to pour it out. Hannah had at the very beginning put her down 'as a middlin' soart o' person,' and vouchsafed her very little notice.

'Auntie Dora! auntie Dora!' cried Sandy, escaping from Hannah's knee, 'I'm coming to sit by zoo.'

And as soon as he had got comfortably into her pocket, he pulled her head down and whispered to her, his thoughts running as before in the theological



groove, 'Auntie Dora, God made me—and God made Cécile—*did* God make that one?'

And he nodded across at Hannah, huddling himself together meanwhile in a paroxysm of glee and mischief. He was excited by the flatteries he had been receiving, and Dora, thankful to see that Hannah had heard nothing, could only quiet him by copious supplies of bread and butter.

David wooed Cécile to sit on a stool beside him, and things went smoothly for a time, though Hannah made it clearly evident that this was not the kind of tea she had expected, and that she 'didn't howd wi' new-fangled ways o' takkin' your vittles.' Reuben did his best to cover and neutralise her remarks by gossip to David about the farm and the valley. 'Eh—it's been nobbut *raggy* weather up o' the moors this winter, Davy, an' a great lot o' sheep lost. Nobbut twothrey o' mine, I thank th' Lord.' But in the midst of a most unflattering account of the later morals and development of the Wigson family, Reuben stopped dead short, with a stare at the door.

'Wal, aa niver!—theer's Mr. Ancrum hissel',—I do uphowd yo!'

And the old man rose with effusion, his queer eyes and face beaming and blinking with a light of affectionate memory, for Ancrum stood in the doorway, smiling a mute inquiry at Lucy as to whether he might come in. David sprang up to bring him into the circle. Hannah held out an ungracious hand. Never, all these years, had she forgiven the ex-minister those representations he had once made on the subject of David's 'prenticing.

Then the new-comer sat down by Reuben cheerily, parrying the farmer's concern about his altered looks, and watching Louie, who had thrown him a careless word in answer to his greeting. Dora, who had come

to know him well, and to feel much of the affectionate reverence for him that David did, in spite of some bewilderment as to his religious position, went round presently to talk to him, and Sandy as it happened was left on his stool for a minute or two forgotten. He asked his mother plaintively for cake, and she did not hear him. Meanwhile Cécile had cake, and he followed her eating of it with resentful eyes.

‘Come here, Cécile,’ said David, ‘and hold the cake while I cut it; there’s a useful child.’

He handed a piece to Reuben, and then put the next into Cécile’s hand.

‘Ready for some more, little woman?’

Cécile in a furtive squirrel-like way seized the piece and was retiring with it, when Sandy, beside himself, jumped from his stool, rushed at his cousin and beat her wildly with his small fists.

‘Yo’re a geedy thing—a geedy ’gustin’ thing!’ he cried, sobbing partly because he wanted the cake, still more because, after his exaltation on Hannah’s knee, he had been so unaccountably neglected. To see Cécile battenning on a second piece while he was denied a first was more than could be borne.

‘You little viper, you!’ exclaimed Louie, and springing up, she swept across to Sandy, and boxed his ears smartly, just as she was accustomed to box Cécile’s, whenever the fancy took her.

The child raised a piercing cry, and David caught him up.

‘Give him to me, David, give him to me,’ cried Lucy, who had almost upset the tea-table in her rush to her child. ‘I’ll see whether that sister of yours shall beat and abuse my boy in my own house! Oh, she may beat her own child as much as she pleases, she does it all day long! If she were a poor person she would be had up.’

Her face glowed with passion. The exasperation of many days spoke in her outburst. David, himself trembling with anger, in vain tried to quiet her and Sandy.

'Ay, I reckon she maks it hot wark for them at ha to live wi' her,' said Hannah audibly, looking round on the scene with a certain enjoyment which contrasted with the panic and distress of the rest.

Louie, who was holding Cécile—also in tears—in her arms, swept her fierce, contemptuous gaze from Lucy to her ancient enemy.

'You must be putting in *your* word, must you?—you old toad, you—you that robbed us of our money till your own husband was ashamed of you!'

And, totally regardless of the presence of Dora and Ancrum, and of the efforts made to silence her by Dora or by the flushed and unhappy Reuben, she descended on her foe. She flung charge after charge in Hannah's face, showing the minutest and most vindictive memory for all the sordid miseries of her childhood; and then when her passion had spent itself on her aunt, she returned to Lucy, exulting in the sobs and the excitement she had produced. In vain did David try either to silence her or to take Lucy away. Nothing but violence could have stopped the sister's tongue; his wife, under a sort of fascination of terror and rage, would not move. Flinging all thoughts of her dependence on David—of the money she had come to ask—of her leave-taking on the morrow—to the winds, Louie revenged herself amply for her week's unnatural self-control, and gave full rein to a mad propensity which had been gradually roused and spurred to an ungovernable force by the trivial incidents of the afternoon. She made mock of Lucy's personal vanity; she sneered at her attempts to ape her betters, shrilly declaring that no one would ever

take her for anything else than what she was, the daughter of a vulgar cheese-paring old hypocrite; and, finally, she attacked Sandy as a nasty, greedy, abominable little monkey, not fit to associate with her child, and badly in want of the stick.

Then slowly she retreated to the door out of breath, the wild lightnings of her eyes flashing on them still. David was holding the hysterical Lucy, while Dora was trying to quiet Sandy. Otherwise a profound silence had fallen on them all, a silence which seemed but to kindle Louie's fury the more.

'Ah, you think you've got him in your power, him and his money, you little white-livered cat!' she cried, standing in the doorway, and fixing Lucy with a look beneath which her sister-in-law quailed, and hid her face on David's arm. 'You think you'll stop him giving it to them that have a right to look to him? Perhaps you'd better look out; perhaps there are people who know more about him than you. Do you think he would ever have looked at you, you little possement, if he hadn't been taken on the rebound?'

She gave a mad laugh as she flung out the old Derbyshire word of abuse, and stood defying them, David and all. David strode forward and shut the door upon her. Then he went tenderly up to his wife, and took her and Sandy into the library.

The sound of Cécile's wails could be heard in the distance. The frightened Reuben turned and looked at his wife. She had grown paler even than before, but her eyes were all alive.

'A racklesome, natterin' creetur as ivir I seed,' she said calmly; 'I allus telt tha, Reuben Grieve, what hoo'd coom to. It's bred in her—that's yan thing to be hodden i' mind. But I'll shift her in double quick-sticks if she ever cooms meddlin' i' *my* house, Reuben Grieve—soa you know.'

'She oughtn't to stay here,' said Ancrum in a quick undertone to Dora; 'she might do that mother and child a mischief.'

Dora sat absorbed in her pity for David, in her passionate sympathy for this home that was as her own.

'She is going to-morrow, thank God!' she said with a long breath; 'oh, what an awful woman!'

Ancrum looked at her with a little sad smile.

'Whom are you sorry for?' he asked. 'Those two in there?' and he nodded towards the library. 'Think again, Miss Dora. There is one face that will haunt me whenever I think of this—the face of that French child.'

All the afternoon visitors disperse. The hours passed. Lucy, worn out, had gone to bed with a crying which seemed to have in it some new and heavy element she would not speak of, even to David. The evening meal came, and there was no sign or sound from that room upstairs where Louie had locked herself in.

David stood by the fire in the dining-room, his lips sternly set. He had despatched a servant to Louie's door with an offer to send up food for her and Cécile. But the girl had got no answer. Was he bound to go—bound to bring about the possible renewal of a degrading scene?

At this moment Lizzie, the little nurse, tapped at the door.

'If you please, sir——'

'Yes. Anything wrong with Master Sandy?'

David went to the door in a tremor. 'He won't go to sleep, sir. He wants you, and I'm afraid he'll disturb mistress again.'

David ran upstairs.

'Sandy, what do you want?'

Sandy was crying violently, far down under the bed-clothes. When David drew him out, he was found to be grasping a piece of crumbling cake, sticky with tears.

'It's Cécile's cake,' he sobbed into his father's ear. 'I want to give it her.'

And in fact, after his onslaught upon her, Cécile had dropped the offending cake, which he had instantly picked up the moment before Louie struck him. He had held it tight gripped ever since, and repentance was busy in his small heart.

David thought a moment.

'Come with me, Sandy,' he said at last, and, wrapping up the child in an old shawl that hung near, he carried him off to Louie's door. 'Louie!' he called, after his knock, in a low voice, for he was uncomfortably aware that his household was on the watch for developments.

For a while there was no answer. Sandy, absorbed in the interest of the situation, clung close to his father and stopped crying.

At last Louie suddenly flung the door wide open.

'What do you want?' she said defiantly, with the gesture and bearing of a tragic actress. She was, however, deadly white, and David, looking past her, saw that Cécile was lying wide awake in her little bed.

'Sandy wants to give Cécile her cake,' he said quietly, 'and to tell her that he is sorry for striking her.'

He carried his boy up to Cécile. A smile flashed over the child's worn face. She held out her little arms. David, infinitely touched, laid down Sandy, and the children crooned together on the same pillow, he trying to stuff the cake into Cécile's mouth, she gently refusing.

'She's ill,' said Louie abruptly, 'she's feverish—I want a doctor.'

'We can get one directly,' he said. 'Will you come down and have some food? Lucy has gone to bed. If Lizzie comes and sits by the children, perhaps they will go to sleep. I can carry Sandy back later.'

Louie paused irresolutely. Then she went up to the bed, knelt down by it, and took Cécile in her arms.

'You can take him away,' she said, pointing to Sandy. 'I will put her to sleep. Don't you send me anything to eat. I want a doctor. And if you won't order a fly for me at twenty minutes to nine to-morrow, I will go out myself, that's all.'

'Louie!' he cried, holding out his hand to her in despair, 'why will you treat us in this way—what have we done to you?'

'Never you mind,' she said sullenly, gathering the child to her and confronting him with steady eyes. There was a certain magnificence in their wide unconscious despair—in this one fierce passion.

She and Lucy did not meet again. In the morning David paid her her hundred pounds, and took her and Cécile to the station, a doctor having seen the child the night before, and prescribed medicine, which had given her a quiet night. Louie barely thanked him for the money. She was almost silent and still very pale.

Just before they parted, the thought of the tyranny of such a nature, of the life to which she was going back, wrung the brother's heart. The outrage of the day before dropped from his mind as of no account, effaced by sterner realities.

'Write to me, Louie!' he said to her just as the train was moving off; 'I could always come if there was trouble—or Dora.'

She did not answer, and her hand dropped from his. But he remembered afterwards that her eyes were fixed upon him, as long as the train was in sight, and the picture of her dark possessed look will be with him to the end.

## CHAPTER VII

It was a warm April Sunday. Lucy and Dora were pacing up and down in the garden, and Lucy was talking in a quick, low voice.

'Oh! there was something, Dora. You know as well as I do there was something. That awful woman didn't say that for nothing. I suppose he'd tell me if I asked him.'

'Then why don't you ask him?' said Dora, with a little frown.

Lucy gathered a sprig of budding lilac, and restlessly stripped off its young green.

'It isn't very pleasant,' she said at last, slowly. 'I dare say it's silly to expect your husband never to have looked at anybody else——'

She paused again, unable to explain herself. Dora glanced at her, and was somewhat struck by her thin and worn appearance. She had often, moreover, seemed to her cousin to be fretting during these last weeks. Not that there was much difference in her ways with David and Sandy. But her small vanities, prejudices, and passions were certainly less apparent of late; she ordered her two servants about less; she was less interested in her clothes, less eager for social amusement. It was as though something clouding and dulling had passed over a personality which was naturally restless and vivacious.

Yet it was only to-day, in the course of some con-



versation about Louie, of whom nothing had been heard since her departure, that Lucy had for the first time broken silence on the subject of those insolent words of her sister-in-law, which Ancrum and Dora had listened to with painful shock, while to Reuben and Hannah, pre-occupied with their own long-matured ideas of Louie, they had been the mere froth of a venomous tongue.

‘Why didn’t you ask him about it at first—just after?’ Dora resumed.

‘I didn’t want to,’ said Lucy, after a minute, and then would say no more. But she walked along, thinking, unhappily, of the moment when David had taken her into the library to be out of the sound of Louie’s rage; of her angry desire to ask him questions, checked by a childish fear she could not analyse, as to what the answers might be; of his troubled, stormy face; and of the tender ways by which he tried to calm and comfort her. It had seemed to her that once or twice he had been on the point of saying something grave and unusual, but in the end he had refrained. Louie had gone away; their everyday life had begun again; he had been very full, in the intervals of his hard daily business, of the rebuilding of the James Street court, and of the apprentices’ school; and, led by a variety of impulses—by a sense of jeopardised possession and a conscience speaking with new emphasis and authority—she had taken care that he should talk to her about both; she had haunted him in the library, and her presence there, once the signal of antagonism and dispute, had ceased to have any such meaning for him. Her sympathy was not very intelligent, and there was at times a childish note of sulkiness and reluctance in it; she was extremely ready to say, ‘I told you so,’ if anything went wrong; but, nevertheless, there was a tacit

renunciation at the root of her new manner to him which he perfectly understood, and rewarded in his own ardent, affectionate way.

As she sauntered along in this pale gleam of sun, now drinking in the soft April wind, now stooping to look at the few clumps of crocuses and daffodils which were pushing through the blackened earth, Lucy had once more a vague sense that her life this spring—this past year—had been hard. It was like the feeling of one who first realises the intensity of some long effort or struggle in looking back upon it. Her little life had been breathed into by a divine breath, and growth, expansion, had brought a pain and discontent she had never known before.

Dora meanwhile had her own thoughts. She was lost in memories of that first talk of hers with David Grieve after his return from Pairs, with the marks of his fierce, mysterious grief fresh upon him; then, pursuing her recollection of him through the years, she came to a point of feeling where she said, with sudden energy, throwing her arm round Lucy, and taking up the thread of their conversation:—

‘I wouldn’t let what Louie said worry you a bit, Lucy. Of course, she wanted to make mischief; but you know, and I know, what sort of a man David has been since you and he were married. That’ll be enough for you, I should think.’

Lucy flushed. She had once possessed very little reticence, and had been quite ready to talk her husband over, any day and all day, with Dora. But now, though she would begin in the old way, there soon came a point when something tied her tongue.

This time she attacked the lilac-bushes again with a restless hand.

‘Why, I thought you were shocked at his opinions,’ she said, proudly.

Dora sighed. Her conscience had not waited for Lucy's remark to make her aware of the constant perplexity between authority and natural feeling into which David's ideals were perpetually throwing her.

'They make one very sad,' she said, looking away. 'But we must believe that God, who sees everything, judges as we cannot do.'

Lucy fired up at once. It annoyed her to have Dora making spiritual allowance for David in this way.

'I don't believe God wants anything but that people should be good,' she said. 'I am sure there are lots of things like that in the New Testament.'

Dora shook her head slowly. '"He that hath not the Son, hath not life,"' she said under her breath, a sudden passion leaping to her eye.

Lucy looked at her indignantly. 'I don't agree with you, Dora—there! And it all depends on what things mean.'

'The meaning is quite plain,' said Dora, with rigid persistence. 'O Lucy, don't be led away. I missed you at early service this morning.'

The look she threw her cousin melted into a pathetic and heavenly reproach.

'Well, I know,' said Lucy, ungraciously, 'I was tired. I don't know what's wrong with me these last weeks; I can't get up in the morning.'

Dora only looked grieved. Lucy understood that her plea seemed to her cousin too trivial and sinful to be noticed.

'Oh! I dare say I'd go,' she said in her own mind, defiantly, 'if *he* went.'

Aloud, she said:—

'Dora, just look at this cheek of mine; I can't think what the swelling is.'

And she turned her right cheek to Dora, pointing to a lump, not discoloured, but rather large, above the cheek-bone. Dora stopped, and looked at it carefully.

‘Yes, I had noticed it,’ she said. ‘It is odd. Can’t you account for it in any way?’

‘No. It’s been coming some little while. David says I must ask Dr. Mildmay about it. I don’t think I shall. It’ll go away. Oh! there they are.’

As she spoke, David and Sandy, who had been out for a Sunday walk together, appeared on the steps of the garden-door. David waved his hat to his wife, an example immediately followed by Sandy, who twisted his Scotch cap madly, and then set off running to her.

Lucy looked at them both with a sudden softening and brightening which gave her charm. David came up to her, ran his arm through hers, and began to give her a laughing account of Sandy’s behaviour. The April wind had flushed him, tumbled his black hair, and called up spring lights in the eyes, which had been somewhat dimmed by overmuch sedentary work and a too small allowance of sleep. His plenitude of virile energy, the glow of health and power which hung round him this afternoon, did but make Lucy seem more languid and faded as she hung upon him, smiling at his stories of their walk and of Sandy’s antics.

He broke off in the middle, and looked at her anxiously.

‘She isn’t the thing, is she, Dora? I believe she wants a change.’

‘Oh! thank you!’ cried Lucy, ironically—‘with all Sandy’s spring things and my own to look to, and some new shirts to get for you, and the spring cleaning to see to. Much obliged to you.’

‘All those things, madam,’ said David, patting her

hand, 'wouldn't matter twopence, if it should please your lord and master to order you off. And if this fine weather goes on, you'll have to take advantage of it. By the way, I met Mildmay, and asked him to come in and see you.'

Lucy reddened.

'Why, there's nothing,' she said, pettishly. 'This 'll go away directly.' Instinctively she put up her hand to her cheek.

'Oh! Mildmay won't worry you,' said David; 'he'll tell you what's wrong at once. You know you like him.'

'Well, I must go,' said Dora.

They understood that she had a mill-girls' Bible class at half-past five, and an evening service an hour later, so they did not press her to stay. Lucy kissed her, and Sandy escorted her half-way to the garden-door, giving her a breathless and magniloquent account of the 'hy'nas and kangawoos' she might expect to find congregated in the Merton Road outside. Dora, who was somewhat distressed by his powers of imaginative fiction, would not 'play up' as his father did, and he left her half-way to run back to David, who was always ready to turn road and back garden into 'Africa country' at a moment's notice, and people it to order with savages, elephants, boomerangs, kangaroos, and all other possible or impossible things that Sandy might chance to want.

Dora, looking back from the garden, saw them all three in a group together—Sandy tugging at his mother's skirts, and shouting at the top of his voice; David's curly black head bent over his wife, who was gathering her brown shawl round her throat, as though the light wind chilled her. But there was no chill in her look. That, for the moment, as she swayed between husband and child, had in it the qualities of

the April sun—a brightness and promise all the more radiant by comparison with the winter or the cloud from which it had emerged.

Dora went home as quickly as tramcar and fast walking could take her. She still lived in the same Ancoats rooms with her shirt-making friend, who had kept company, poor thing! for four years with a young man, and had then given him up with anguish because he was not 'the sort of man she'd been taking him for,' though no one but Dora had ever known what qualities or practices, intolerable to a pure mind, the sad phrase covered. Dora might long ago have moved to more comfortable rooms and a better quarter of the town had she been so minded, for her wages as an admirable forewoman and an exceptionally skilled hand were high; but she passionately preferred to be near St. Damian's and amongst her 'girls.' Also, there was the thought that by staying in the place whither she had originally moved she would be more easily discoverable if ever,—ay, if *ever*—Daddy should come back to her. She was certain that he was still alive; and great as the probabilities on the other side became with every passing year, few people had the heart to insist upon them in the face of her sensitive faith, whereof the bravery was so close akin to tears.

Only once in all these years had there been a trace of Daddy. Through a silk-merchant acquaintance of his, having relations with Lyons and other foreign centres, David had once come across a rumour which had seemed to promise a clue. He had himself gone across to Lyons at once, and had done all he could. But the clue broke in his hand, and the tanned, long-faced lunatic from Manchester, whereof report had spoken, could be only doubtfully identified with a man who bore no likeness at all to Daddy.

Dora's expectation and hope had been stirred to their depths, and she bore her disappointment hardly. But she did not therefore cease to hope. Instinctively on this Sunday night, when she reached home, she put Daddy's chair, which had been pushed aside, in its right place by the fire, and she tenderly propped up a stuffed bird, originally shot by Daddy in the Vosges, and now vilely overtaken by Manchester moths. Then she set round chairs and books for her girls.

Soon they came trooping up the stairs, in their neat Sunday dresses, so sharply distinguished from the mill-gear of the week, and she spent with them a moving and mystical hour. She was expounding to them a little handbook of 'The Blessed Sacrament,' and her explanations wound up with a close appeal to each one of them to make more use of the means of grace, to surrender themselves more fully to the awful and unspeakable mystery by which the Lord gave them His very flesh to eat, His very blood to drink, so fashioning within them, Communion after Communion, the immortal and incorruptible body which should be theirs in the Resurrection.

She spoke in a low, vibrating voice, somewhat monotonous in tone; her eyes shone with strange light under her round, prominent brow; all that she said of the joys of frequent Communion, of the mortal perils of unworthy participation, of treating the heavenly food lightly—coming to it, that is, unfasting and unprepared—of the need especially of Lenten self-denial, of giving up what each one of you likes best, so far as you can,' in preparation for the great Easter Eucharist—came evidently from the depths of her own intense conviction. Her girls listened to her with answering excitement and awe; one of them she had saved from drink, all of them had been her Sun-

day-school children for years, and many of them possessed, under the Lancashire exterior, the deep-lying poetry and emotion of the North.

When she dismissed them she hurried off to church, to sit once more dissolved in feeling, aspiration, penitence; to feel the thrill of the organ, the pathos of the bare altar, and the Lenten hymns.

After the service she had two or three things to settle with one of the curates and with some of her co-helpers in the good works of the congregation, so that when she reached home she was late and tired out. Her fellow-lodger was spending the Sunday with friends; there was no one to talk to her at her supper; and after supper she fell, sitting by the fire, into a mood of some flatness and reaction. She tried to read a religious book, but the religious nerve could respond no more, and other interests, save those of her daily occupations, she had none.

In Daddy's neighbourhood, what with his travels, his whims, and his quotations, there had been always something to stir the daughter's mind, even if it were only to reprobation. But since he had left her the circle of her thoughts had steadily and irrevocably narrowed. All secular knowledge, especially the reading of other than religious books, had become gradually and painfully identified, for her, with those sinister influences which made David Grieve an 'unbeliever,' and so many of the best Manchester workmen 'atheists.'

So now, in her physical and moral slackness, she sat and thought with some bitterness of a 'young woman' who had recently entered the shop which employed her, and, by dint of a clever tongue, was gaining the ear of the authorities, to the disturbance of some of Dora's cherished methods of distributing and organising the work. They might have trusted her more after all



these years; but nobody appreciated her; she counted for nothing.

Then her mind wandered on to the familiar grievances of Sandy's religious teaching and Lucy's gradual defection from St. Damian's. She must make more efforts with Lucy, even if it angered David. She looked back on what she had done to bring about the marriage, and lashed herself into a morbid sense of responsibility.

But her missionary projects were no more cheering to her than her thoughts about the shop and her work, and she felt an intense sense of relief when she heard the step of her room-mate, Mary Styles, upon the stairs. She made Mary go into every little incident of her day; she was insatiable for gossip—a very rare mood for her—and could not be chattered to enough.

And all through she leant her head against her father's chair, recalling Lucy on her husband's arm, and the child at her skirts, with the pathetic inarticulate longing which makes the tragedy of the single life. She could have loved so well, and no one had ever wished to make her his wife; the wound of it bled sometimes in her inmost heart.

Meanwhile, on this same April Sunday, Lucy, after Sandy was safe in bed, brought down some needlework to do beside David while he read. It was not very long since she had induced herself to make so great a breach in the Sunday habits of her youth. As soon as David's ideals began to tease her out of thought and sympathy, his freedoms also began to affect her. She was no longer so much chilled by his strictness, or so much shocked by his laxity.

David had spoken of a busy evening. In reality, a lazy fit overtook him. He sat smoking, and turning

over the pages of Eckermann's 'Conversations with Goethe.'

'What are you reading?' said Lucy at last, struck by his face of enjoyment. 'Why do you like it so much?'

'Because there is no one else in the world who hits the right nail on the head so often as Goethe,' he said, throwing himself back with a stretch of pleasure. 'So wide a brain—so acute and sane a temper!'

Lucy looked a little lost, as she generally did when David made literary remarks to her. But she did not drop the subject.

'You said something to Professor Madgwick the other day about a line of Goethe you used to like so when you were a boy. What did it mean?'

She flushed, as though she were venturing on something which would make her ridiculous.

'A line of Goethe?' repeated David, pondering. 'Oh! I know. Yes, it was a line from Goethe's novel of "Werther." When I was young and foolish—when you and I were first acquainted, in fact, and you used to scold me for going to the Hall of Science!—I often said this line to myself over and over. I didn't know much German, but the swing of it carried me away.'

And, with a deep voice and rhythmic accent, he repeated: '*Handwerker trugen ihn; kein Geistlicher hat ihn begleitet.*'

'What does it mean?' said Lucy.

'Well, it comes at the end of the story. The hero commits suicide for love, and Goethe says that at his burial, on the night after his death, "labouring men bore him; no priest went with him."'

He bent forward, clasping his hands tightly, with the half smiling, half dreamy look of one who recalls a bygone thrill of feeling, partly in sympathy, partly in irony.

‘Then he wasn’t a Christian?’ said Lucy, wondering. ‘Do you still hate priests so much, David?’

‘It doesn’t look like it, does it, madam,’ he said, laughing, ‘when you think of all my clergymen friends?’

And, in fact, as Lucy’s mind pondered his answer, she easily remembered the readiness with which any of the clergy at St. Damian’s would ask his help in sending away a sick child, or giving a man a fresh start in life, or setting the necessary authorities to work in the case of some moral or sanitary scandal. She thought also of various Dissenting ministers who called on him and corresponded with him; of his reverent affection for Canon Aylwin, for Ancrum.

‘Well, any way, you care about the labouring men,’ she went on persistently. ‘I suppose you’re what father used to call a “canting Socialist”?’

‘No,’ said David, quietly—‘no, I’m not a Socialist, except’—and he smiled—‘in the sense in which some one said the other day, “we are all Socialists now.”’

‘Well, what does it mean?’ said Lucy, threading another needle, and feeling a certain excitement in this prolonged mental effort.

David tried to explain to her the common Socialist ideal in simple terms—the hope of a millennium, when all the instruments of production shall be owned by the State, and when the surplus profit produced by labour, over and above the maintenance of the worker and the general cost of production, will go, not to the capitalist, the individual rich man, but to the whole community of workers; when everybody will be made to work, and as little advantage as possible will be allowed to one worker above another.

‘I think it’s absurd!’ said Lucy, up in arms at once for all the superiorities she loved. ‘What nonsense! Why, they can’t ever do it!’

‘Well, it’s about that!’ said David, smiling at her. ‘Still, no doubt it *could* be done, if it ought to be done. But Socialism, as a system, seems to *me*, at any rate, to strike down and weaken the most precious thing in the world, that on which the whole of civilised life and progress rests—the spring of will and conscience in the individual. Socialism as a spirit, as an influence, is as old as organised thought—and from the beginning it has forced us to think of the many when otherwise we should be sunk in thinking of the one. But, as a modern dogmatism, it is like other dogmatisms. The new truth of the future will emerge from it as a bud from its sheath, taking here and leaving there.’

He sat looking into the fire, forgetting his wife a little.

‘Well, any way, I’m sure you and I won’t have anything to do with it,’ said Lucy, positively. ‘I don’t a bit believe Lady Driffield will have to work in the mills, though Mrs. Shepton did say it would do her good. I shouldn’t mind something, perhaps, which would make her and Colonel Danby less uppish.’

She drew her needle in and out with vindictive energy.

‘Well, I don’t see much prospect of uppish people dying out of the world,’ said David, throwing himself back in his chair; ‘until——’

He paused.

‘Until what?’ inquired Lucy.

‘Well, of course,’ he said after a minute, in a low voice, ‘we must always hold that the world is tending to be better, that the Divine Life in it will somehow realise itself, that pride will become gentleness, and selfishness love. But the better life cannot be imposed from without—it must grow from within.’

Lucy pondered a moment.

'Then is it—is it because you think working-men *better* than other people that you are so much more interested in them? Because you are, you know.'

'Oh dear no!' he said, smiling at her from under the hand which shaded his eyes; 'they have their own crying faults and follies. But—so many of them lack the first elementary conditions which make the better life possible—that is what tugs at one's heart and fills one's mind! How can *we*—we who have gained for ourselves health and comfort and knowledge—how can we stand by patiently and see our brother diseased and miserable and ignorant?—how can we bear our luxuries, so long as a child is growing up in savagery whom we might have taught,—or a man is poisoning himself with drink whom we might have saved,—or a woman is dropping from sorrow and overwork whom we might have cherished and helped? We are not our own—we are parts of the whole. Generations of workers have toiled for us in the past. And are we, in return, to carry our wretched bone off to our own miserable corner!—sharing and giving nothing? Woe to us if we do! Upon such comes indeed the "second death,"—the separation final and irretrievable, as far, at any rate, as this world is concerned, between us and the life of God!'

Lucy had dropped her work. She sat staring at him—at the shining eyes, at the hand against the brow which shook a little, at the paleness which went so readily in him with any expression of deep emotion. Never had he so spoken to her before; never, all these years. In general no one shrank more than he from 'high phrases;' no one was more anxious than he to give all philanthropic talk a shrewd business-like aspect, which might prevent questions as to what lay beneath.

Her heart fluttered a little.

'David!' she broke out, 'what is it you believe? You know Dora thinks you believe nothing.'

'Does she?' he said, with evident shrinking. 'No, I don't think she does.'

Lucy instinctively moved her chair closer to him, and laid her head against his knee.

'Yes, she does. But I don't mind about that. I just wish you'd tell me why you believe in God, when you won't go to church, and when you think Jesus was just—just a man.'

She drew her breath quickly. She was making a first voyage of discovery in her husband's deepest mind, and she was astonished at her own venturesomeness.

He put out a hand and touched her hair.

'I can't read Nature and life any other way,' he said at last, after a silence. 'There seems to me something in myself, and in other human beings, which is beyond Nature—which, instead of being made by Nature, is the condition of our knowing there is a Nature at all. This something—reason, consciousness, soul, call it what you will—unites us to the world; for everywhere in the world reason is at home, and gradually finds itself; it makes us aware of a great order in which we move; it breaks down the barriers of sense between us and the absolute consciousness, the eternal life—"not ourselves," yet in us and akin to us!—whence, if there is any validity in human logic, that order must spring. And so, in its most perfect work, it carries us to God—it bids us claim our sonship—it gives us hope of immortality!'

His voice had the vibrating intensity of prayer. Lucy hardly understood what he said at all, but the tears came into her eyes as she sat hiding them against his knee.

'But what makes you think God is good—that He cares anything about us?' she said softly.

‘Well—I look back on human life, and I ask what reason—which is the Divine Life communicated to us, striving to fulfil itself in us—has done, what light it throws upon its “great Original.” And then I see that it has gradually expressed itself in law, in knowledge, in love; that it has gradually learnt, under the pressure of something which is itself and not itself, that to be gained life must be lost; that beauty, truth, love, are the *realities* which abide. Goodness as slowly proved itself in the world,—is every day proving itself,—like a light broadening in darkness!—to be that to which reason tends, in which it realises itself. And, if so, goodness here, imperfect and struggling as we see it always, must be the mere shadow and hint of that goodness which is in God!—and the utmost we can conceive of human tenderness, holiness, truth, though it tell us all we know, can yet suggest to us only the minutest fraction of what must be the Divine tenderness,—holiness,—truth.’

There was a silence.

‘But this,’ he added after a bit, ‘is not to be *proved* by argument, though argument is necessary and inevitable, the mind being what it is. It can only be proved by living,—by taking it into our hearts,—by every little victory we gain over the evil self.’

The fire burnt quietly beside them. Everything was still in the house. Nothing stirred but their own hearts.

At last Lucy looked up quickly.

‘I am glad,’ she said with a kind of sob—‘glad you think God loves us, and, if Sandy and I were to die, you would find us again.’

Instead of answering, he bent forward quickly and kissed her. She gave a little shrinking movement.

‘Oh! that poor cheek!’ he said remorsefully; ‘did I touch it? I hope Dr. Mildmay won’t forget to-morrow.’

'Oh! never mind about it,' she said, half impatiently. 'David!'

Her little thin face twitched and trembled. He was puzzled by her sudden change of expression, her agitation.

'David!—you know—you know what Louie said. I want you to tell me whether she—she meant anything.'

He gave a little start, then he understood perfectly.

'My dear wife,' he said, laying his hand on hers, which were crossed on his knee.

She waited breathlessly.

'You shall know all there is to know,' he said at last, with an effort. 'I thought perhaps you would have questioned me directly after that scene, and I would have told you; but as you did not, I could not bring myself to begin. What Louie said had to do with things that happened a year before I asked you to be my wife. When I spoke to you, they were dead and gone. The girl herself—was married. It was her story as well as my own, and it seemed to concern no one else in the world—not even you, dear. So I thought then, any way. Since, I have often wondered whether I was right.'

'Was it when you were in Paris?' she asked sharply.

He gave a sign of assent.

'I thought so!' she cried, drawing her breath. 'I always said there was more than being ill. I said so to Dora. Well, tell me—tell me at once! What was she like? Was she young, and good-looking?'

He could not help smiling at her—there was something so childish in her jealous curiosity.

'Let me tell you in order,' he said, 'and then we will both put it out of sight—at least, till I see Louie again.'

His heavy sigh puzzled her. But her strained and eager eyes summoned him to begin.



He told her everything, with singular simplicity and frankness. To Lucy it was indeed a critical and searching moment! No wife, whatever stuff she may be made of, can listen to such a story for the first time, from the husband she loves and respects, without passing thereafter into a new state of consciousness towards him. Sometimes she could hardly realise at all that it applied to David, this tale of passion he was putting, with averted face, into these short and sharp sentences. That conception of him which the daily life of eight years, with its growing self-surrender, its expanding spiritual force, had graven on her mind, clashed so oddly with all that he was saying! A certain desolate feeling, too large and deep in all its issues to be harboured long in her slight nature, came over her now and then. She had been so near to him all these years, and had yet known nothing. It was the separateness of the individual lot—that awful and mysterious chasm which divides even lover from lover—which touched her here and there like a cold hand, from which she shrank.

She grew a little cold and pale when he spoke of his weeks of despair, of the death from which Ancrum had rescued him. But any ordinary prudish word of blame, even for his silence towards her, never occurred to her. Once she asked him a wistful question:—

‘You and she thought that marrying didn’t matter at all when people loved each other—that nobody had a right to interfere? Do you think that now, David?’

‘No,’ he said, with deep emphasis. ‘No.—I have come to think the most disappointing and hopeless marriage, nobly borne, to be better worth having than what people call an “ideal passion,”—if the ideal passion must be enjoyed at the expense of one of those fundamental rules which poor human nature has worked out, with such infinite difficulty and pain, for

the protection and help of its own weakness. I did not know it,—but, so far as in me lay, I was betraying and injuring that society which has given me all I have.'

She sat silent. '*The most disappointing marriage.*' An echo from that overheard talk at Benet's Park floated through her mind. She winced, and shrank, even as she realised his perfect innocence of any such reference.

Then, with eagerness, she threw herself into innumerable questions about Elise—her looks, her motives, the details of what she said and did. Beneath the satisfaction of her curiosity, of course, there was all the time a pang—a pang not to be silenced. In her flights of idle fancy she had often suspected something not unlike the truth, basing her conjecture on the mystery which had always hung round that Paris visit, partly on the world's general experience of what happened to handsome young men. For, in her heart of hearts, had there not lurked all the time a wonder which was partly self-judgment? Had David, with such a temperament, never been more deeply moved than she knew herself to have moved him? More than once a secret inarticulate suspicion of this kind had crossed her. The poorest and shallowest soul may have these flashes of sad insight, under the kindling of its affections.

But now she *knew*, and the difference was vast. After she had asked all her questions, and delivered a vehement protest against the tenacity of his self-reproach with regard to Louie—for what decent girl need go wrong unless she has a mind to?—she laid her head down again on David's knee.

'I don't think she cared much about you—I'm sure she couldn't have,' she said slowly, finding a certain pleasure in the words.

David did not answer. He was sunk in memory. How far away lay that world of art and the artist from this dusty, practical life in which he was now immersed! At no time had he been really akin to it. The only art to which he was naturally susceptible was the art of oratory and poetry. Elise had created in him an artificial taste, which had died with his passion. Yet now, as his quickened mind lingered in the past, he felt a certain wide philosophic regret for the complete divorce which had come about between him and so rich a section of human experience.

He was roused from his reverie, which would have reassured her, could she have followed it, more than any direct speech, by a movement from Lucy. Dropping the hand which had once more stolen over his brow, he saw her looking at him with wide, wet eyes.

‘David!’

‘Yes.’

‘Come here! close to me!’

He moved forward, and laid his arm round her shoulders, as she sat in her low chair beside him.

‘What is it, dear? I have been keeping you up too late.’

She lifted a hand, and brought his face near to hers.

‘David, I am a stupid little thing—but I do understand more than I did, and I would never, *never* desert you for anything,—for any sorrow or trouble in the world!’

The mixture of yearning, pain, triumphant affection in her tone, cannot be rendered in words.

His whole heart melted to her. As he held her to his breast, the hour they had just passed through took for both of them a sacred meaning and importance. Youth was going—their talk had not been the talk of youth. Was true love just beginning?

## CHAPTER VIII

*'My God! My God!'*

The cry was David's. He had reeled back against the table in his study, his hand upon an open book, his face turned to Doctor Mildmay, who was standing by the fireplace.

'Of course, I can't be sure,' said the doctor hastily, almost guiltily. 'You must not take it on my authority alone. Try and throw it off your mind. Take your wife up to town to see Selby or Paget, and if I am wrong I shall be too thankful! And, above all, don't frighten her. Take care—she will be down again directly.'

'You say,' said David, thickly, 'that if it were what you suspect, operation would be difficult. Yes, I see there is something of the sort here.'

He turned, shaking all over, to the book beside him, which was a medical treatise he had just taken down from his scientific bookcase.

'It would be certainly difficult,' said the doctor, frowning, his lower lip pushed forward in a stress of thought, 'but it would have to be attempted. Only, on the temporal bone it will be a puzzle to go deep enough.'

David's eye ran along the page beside him. 'Sarcoma, which was originally regarded with far less terror than cancer (carcinoma), is now generally held by doctors to be more malignant and more deadly. There is much less pain, but surgery can do less, and death is in most cases infinitely more rapid.'

'Hush!' said the doctor, with short decision, 'I hear her coming down again. Let me speak.'

Lucy, who had run upstairs to quiet a yell of crying from Sandy immediately after Doctor Mildmay had finished his examination of her swollen cheek, opened the door as he spoke. She was slightly flushed, and her eyes were more wide open and restless than usual. David was apparently bending over a drawer which he had opened on the farther side of his writing-table. The doctor's face was entirely as usual.

'Well now, Mrs. Grieve,' he said cheerily, 'we have been agreeing—your husband and I—that it will be best for you to go up to London and have that cheek looked at by one of the crack surgeons. They will give you the best advice as to what to do with it. It is not a common ailment, and we are very fine fellows down here, but of course we can't get the experience, in a particular line of cases, of one of the first-rate surgical specialists. Do you think you could go to-morrow? I could make an appointment for you by telegraph to-day.'

Lucy gave a little unsteady, affected laugh.

'I don't see how I can go all in a moment like that,' she said. 'It doesn't matter! Why don't you give me something for it, and it will go away.'

'Oh! but it does matter,' said the doctor, firmly. 'Lumps like that are serious things, and mustn't be trifled with.'

'But what will they want to do to it?' said Lucy, nervously. She was standing with one long, thin hand resting lightly on the back of a chair, looking from David, whose face and figure were blurred to her by the dazzle of afternoon light coming in through the window, to Doctor Mildmay.

The doctor cleared his throat.

'They would only want to do what was best for you in every way,' he said; 'you may be sure of that.'

Could you be very brave if they advised you that it ought to be removed?’

She gave a little shriek.

‘What! you mean cut it out—cut it away!’ she cried, shaking, and looking at him with the frowning anger of a child. ‘Why, it would leave an ugly mark, a hideous mark!’

‘No, it wouldn’t. The mark would disfigure you much less than the swelling. They would take care to draw the skin together again neatly, and you could easily arrange your hair a little. But you ought to get a first-rate opinion.’

‘What is it? what do you call it?’ said Lucy, irritably. ‘I can’t think why you make such a fuss.’

‘Well, it might be various things,’ he said evasively. ‘Any way, you take my advice, and have it seen to. I can telegraph as I go from here.’

‘I could take you up to-morrow,’ said David, coming forward in answer to the disturbed look she threw him. Now that her flush had faded, how pale and drooping she was in the strong light! ‘It would be better, dear, to do what Doctor Mildmay recommends. And you never mind a day in London, you know.’

Did she detect any difference in the voice? She moved up to him, and he put his arm round her.

‘Must I?’ she said, helplessly; ‘it’s such a bore, to-morrow particularly. I had promised to take Sandy out to tea.’

‘Well, let that young man go without a treat for once,’ said the doctor, laughing. ‘He has a deal too many, any way. Very well, that’s settled. I will telegraph as I go to the train. Just come here a moment, Grieve.’

The two went out together. When David returned, any one who had happened to be in the hall would have seen that he could hardly open the sitting-room

door, so fumbling were his movements. As he passed through the room to reach the study he caught sight of his own face in a glass, and stopping, with clenched hands, pulled himself together by the effort of his whole being.

When he opened the study-door, Lucy was hunting about his table in a quick, impatient way.

'I can't think where you keep your indiarubber rings, David. I want to put one round a parcel for Dora.'

He found one for her. Then she stood by the fire, as the sunset-light faded into dusk, and poured out to him a story of domestic grievances. Sarah, their cook, wished to leave and be married—it was very unexpected and very inconsiderate, and Lucy did not believe the young man was steady; and how on earth was she to find another cook? It was enough to drive one wild, the difficulty of getting cooks in Manchester.

For nearly an hour, till the supper-bell rang, she stood there, with her foot on the fender, chattering in a somewhat sharp, shrill way. Not one word would she say, or let him say, of London or the doctor's visit.

After supper, as they went back into the study, David looked for the railway-guide. 'The 10.15 will do,' he said. 'Mildmay has made the appointment for three. We can just get up in time.'

'It is great nonsense!' said Lucy, pouting. 'The question is, can we get back? I must get back. I don't want to leave Sandy for the night. He's got a cold.'

It seemed to David that something clutched at his breath and voice. Was it he or some one else that said:—

'That will be too tiring, dear. We shall have to stay the night.'

'No, I *must* get back,' said Lucy, obstinately.

Afterwards she brought her work as usual, and he professed to smoke and read. But the evening passed, for him, beneath his outward quiet, in a hideous whirl of images and sensations, which ultimately wore itself out, and led to a mood of dulness and numbness. Every now and then, as he sat there, with the fire crackling, and the familiar walls and books about him, he felt himself sinking, as it were, in a sudden abyss of horror; then, again, the scene of the afternoon seemed to him absurd, and he despised his own panic. He dwelt upon everything the doctor had said about the rarity, the exceptional nature of such an illness. Well, what is rare does not happen—not to oneself—that was what he seemed to be clinging to at last.

When Lucy went up to bed, he followed her in about a quarter of an hour.

'Why, you are early!' she said, opening her eyes.

'I am tired,' he said. 'There was a great press of work to-day. I want a long night.'

In reality, he could not bear her out of his sight. Hour after hour he tossed restlessly, beside her quiet sleep, till the spring morning broke.

They left Manchester next morning in a bitter east wind. As she passed through the hall to the cab, Lucy left a little note for Dora on the table, with instructions that it should be posted.

'I want her to come and see him at his bedtime,' she said, 'for of course we can't get back for that.'

David said nothing. When they got to the station, he dared not even propose to her the extra comfort of first class, lest he should intensify the alarm he perfectly well divined under her offhand, flighty manner.

By three o'clock they were in the waiting-room of the famous doctor they had come to see. Lucy looked



round her nervously as they entered, with quick, dilating nostrils, and across David there swept a sudden choking memory of the trapped and fluttering birds he had sometimes seen in his boyhood struggling beneath a birdcatcher's net on the moors.

As the appointment was at an unusual time, they were not kept waiting very long by the great man. He received them with a sort of kindly distance, made his examination very quickly, and asked her a number of general questions, entering the answers in his large patients' book.

Then he leant back in his chair, looking thoughtfully at Lucy over his spectacles.

'Well,' he said at last, with a perfectly cheerful and business-like voice, 'I am quite clear there is only one thing to be done, Mrs. Grieve. You must have that growth removed.'

Lucy flushed.

'I want you to give me something to take it away,' she said, half sullenly, half defiantly. She was sitting very erect, in a little tight-fitting black jacket, with her small black hat and veil on her knee.

'No, I am sorry to say nothing can be done in that way. If you were my daughter or sister, I should say to you, have that lump removed without a day's, an hour's unnecessary delay. These growths are not to be trifled with.'

He spoke with a mild yet penetrating observance of her. A number of reflections were passing rapidly through his mind. The operation was a most unpromising one, but it was clearly the surgeon's duty to try it. The chances were that it would prolong life which was now speedily and directly threatened, owing to the proximity of the growth to certain vital points.

'When could you do it?' said David, so hoarsely that he had to repeat his question. He was standing

with his arm on the mantelpiece, looking down on the surgeon and his wife.

The great man lifted his eyebrows, and looked at his engagement-book attentively.

'I *could* do it to-morrow,' he said at last; 'and the sooner, the better. Have you got lodgings? or can I help you? And——'

Then he stopped, and looked at Lucy. 'Let me settle things with your husband, Mrs. Grieve,' he said, with a kindly smile. 'You look tired after your journey. You will find a fire and some newspapers in the waiting-room.'

And, with a suavity not to be gainsaid, he ushered her himself across the hall, and shut the waiting-room door upon her. Then he came back to David.

A little while after a bell rang, and the man-servant who answered it presently took some brandy into the consulting-room. Lucy meanwhile sat, in a dazed way, looking out of window at the square garden, where the lilacs were already in full leaf in spite of the east wind.

When her husband and the doctor came in she sprang up, looking partly awkward, partly resentful. Why had they been discussing it all without her?

'Well, Mrs. Grieve,' said the doctor, 'your husband is just going to take you on to see the lodgings I recommend. By good luck they are just vacant. Then, if you like them, you know, you can settle in at once.'

'But I haven't brought anything for the night,' cried Lucy in an injured voice, looking at David.

'We will telegraph to Dora, darling,' he said, taking up her bag and umbrella from the table; 'but now we mustn't keep Mr. Selby. He has to go out.'

'How long will it take?' interrupted Lucy, addressing the surgeon. 'Can I get back next day?'

‘Oh no! you will have to be four or five days in town. But don’t alarm yourself, Mrs. Grieve. You won’t know anything at all about the operation itself; your husband will look after you, and then a little patience—and hope for the best. Now I really must be off. Good-bye to you—good-bye to you.’

And he hurried off, leaving them to find their own cab. When they got in, Lucy said, passionately:—

‘I want to go back, David. I want Sandy. I won’t go to these lodgings.’

Then courage came to him. He took her hand.

‘Dear, dear wife—for my sake—for Sandy’s!’

She stared at him—at his white face.

‘Shall I die?’ she cried, with the same passionate tone.

‘No, no, no!’ he said, kissing the quivering hand, and seeing no one but her in the world, though they were driving through the crowd of Regent Street. ‘But we must do everything Mr. Selby said. That hateful thing must be taken away—it is so near—think for yourself!—to the eye and the brain; and it might go downwards to the throat. You will be brave, won’t you? We will look after you so—Dora and I.’

Lucy sank back in the cab, with a sudden collapse of nerve and spirit. David hung over her, comforting her, one moment promising her that in a few days she should have Sandy again, and be quite well; the next, checked and turned to stone by the memory of the terrible possibilities freely revealed to him in his private talk with Mr. Selby, and by the sense that he might be soothing the present only to make the future more awful.

‘David! she is in such fearful pain! The nurse says she must have more morphia. They didn’t give her enough. Will you run to Mr. Selby’s house? You

won't find him, of course—he is on his round—but his assistant, who was with him here just now, went back there. Run for him at once.'

It was Dora who spoke, as she closed the folding-doors of the inner room where Lucy lay. David, who was crouching over the fire in the sitting-room, whither the nurse had banished him for a while, after the operation, sprang up, and disappeared in an instant. Those faint, distant sounds of anguish which had been in his ear for half an hour or more, ever since the doctors had departed, declaring that everything was satisfactorily over, had been more than his manhood could bear.

He returned in an incredibly short space of time with a young surgeon, who at once administered another injection of morphia.

'A highly sensitive patient,' he said to David, 'and the nerves have, no doubt, been badly cut. But she will do now.'

And, indeed, the moaning had ceased. She lay with closed eyes—so small a creature in the wide bed—her head and face swathed in bandages. But the breathing was growing even and soft. She was once more unconscious.

The doctor touched David's hand and went, after a word with the nurse.

'Won't you go into the next room, sir, and have your tea? Mrs. Grieve is sure to sleep now,' said the nurse to him in her compassion.

He shook his head, and sat down near the foot of the bed. The nurse went into the dressing-room a moment to speak to Dora, who was doing some unpacking there, and he was left alone with his wife.

The sounds of the street came into the silent room, and every now and then he had a start of agony, thinking that she was moving again—that she was in

pain again. But no, she slept; her breath came gently through the childish parted lips, and the dim light—for the nurse had drawn the curtains on the lengthening April day—hid her pallor and the ghastliness of the dressings.

Forty-eight hours ago, and they were in the garden with Sandy! And now life seemed to have passed for ever into this half-light of misery. Everything had dropped away from him—the interests of his business, his books, his social projects. He and she were shut out from the living world. Would she ever rise from that bed again—ever look at him with the old look?

He sat on there, hour after hour, till Dora coaxed him into the sitting-room for a while, and tried to make him take some food. But he could not touch it, and how the sudden gas which the servant lit glared on his sunken eyes! He waited on his companion mechanically, then sat, with his head on his hand, listening for the sound of the doctors' steps.

When they came, they hardly disturbed their patient. She moaned at being touched; but everything was right, and the violent pain which had unexpectedly followed the operation was not likely to recur.

'And what a blessing that she took the chloroform so well, with hardly any after-effects!' said Mr. Selby cheerily, drawing on his gloves in the sitting-room. 'Well, Mr. Grieve, you have got a good nurse, and can leave your wife to her with perfect peace of mind. You must sleep, or you will knock up; let me give you a sleeping draught.'

'Oh! I shall sleep,' said David, impatiently. 'You considered the operation successful—completely successful?'

The surgeon looked gravely into the fire.

'I shall know more in a week or so,' he said. 'I have never disguised from you, Mr. Grieve, how seri-

ous and difficult the case was. Still, we have done what was right—we can but wait for the issue.’

An hour later Dora looked into the sitting-room, and said softly:—

‘She would like to see you, David.’

He went in, holding his breath. There was a night-light in the room, and her face was lying in deep shadow.

He knelt down beside her, and kissed her hand.

‘My darling!’ he said—and his voice was quite firm and steady—‘are you easier now?’

‘Yes,’ she said faintly. ‘Where are you going to sleep?’

‘In a room just beyond Dora’s room. She could make me hear in a moment if you wanted me.’

Then, as he looked closer, he saw that about her head was thrown the broad white lace scarf she had worn round her neck on the journey up. And as he bent to her, she suddenly opened her languid eyes, and gazed at him full. For the moment it was as though she were given back to him.

‘I made Dora put it on,’ she said feebly, moving her hand towards the lace. ‘Does it hide all those nasty bandages?’

‘Yes. I can’t see them at all.’

‘Is it pretty?’

The little gleam of a smile nearly broke down his self-command.

‘Very,’ he said, with a quivering lip.

She closed her eyes again.

‘Oh! I hope Lizzie will look after Sandy,’ she said after a while, with a long sigh.

Not a word now of wilfulness, of self-assertion! After the sullenness and revolt of the day before, which had lasted intermittently almost up to the

coming of the doctors, nothing could be more speaking, more pathetic, than this helpless acquiescence.

'I mustn't stay with you,' he said. 'You ought to be going to sleep again. Nurse will give you something if you can't.'

'I'm quite comfortable,' she said, sleepily. 'There isn't any pain.'

And she seemed to pass quickly and easily into sleep as he sat looking at her.

An hour or two later, Dora, who could not sleep from the effects of fatigue and emotion, was lying in her uncomfortable stretcher-bed, thinking with a sort of incredulity of all that had passed since David's telegram had reached her the day before, or puzzling herself to know how her employers could possibly spare her for another three or four days' holiday, when she was startled by some recurrent sounds from the room beyond her own. David was sleeping there, and Dora, with her woman's quickness, had at once perceived that the partition between them was very thin, and had been as still as a mouse in going to bed.

The sound alarmed her, though she could not make it out. Instinctively she put her ear to the wall. After a minute or two she hastily moved away, and hiding her head under the bedclothes, fell to soft crying and praying.

For it was the deep rending sound of suppressed weeping, the weeping of a strong man who believes himself alone with his grief and with God. That she should have heard it at all filled her with a sort of shame.

Things, however, looked much brighter on the following morning. The wound caused by the operation was naturally sore and stiff, and the dressing was

painful; but when the doctor's visit was over, and Lucy was lying in the halo of her white scarf on her fresh pillows, in a room which Dora and the nurse had made daintily neat and straight, her own cheerfulness was astonishing. She made Dora go out and get her some patterns for Sandy's summer suits, and when they came she lay turning them over from time to time, or weakly twisting first one and then another round her finger. She was, of course, perpetually anxious to know when she would be well, and whether the scar would be very bad; but on the whole she was a docile and promising patient, and she even began to see some gleams of virtue in Mr. Selby, for whom at first she had taken the strongest dislike.

Meanwhile, David, haunted always by a horrible knowledge which was hid from her, could get nothing decided for the future out of the doctors.

'We must wait,' said Mr. Selby; 'for the present all is healing well, but I wish we could get up her general strength. It must have been running down badly of late.'

Whereupon David was left reproaching himself for blindness and neglect, the real truth being that, with any one of Lucy's thin elastic frame and restless temperament, a good deal of health-degeneration may go on without its becoming conspicuous.

A few days passed. Dora was forced to go back to work; but as she was to take up her quarters at the Merton Road house, and to write long accounts of Sandy to his mother every day, Lucy saw her depart with considerable equanimity. Dora left her patient on the sofa, a white and ghostly figure, but already talking eagerly of returning to Manchester in a week. When she heard the cab roll off, Lucy lay back on her cushions and counted the minutes till David should come in from the British Museum, whither, because of



her improvement, he had gone to clear up one or two bibliographical points. She caressed the thought of being left alone with him, except for the nurse—left to that tender and special care he was bestowing on her so richly, and through which she seemed to hold and know him afresh.

When he came in she reproached him for being late, and both enjoyed and scouted his pleas in answer.

‘Well, I don’t care,’ she said obstinately; ‘I wanted you.’

Then she heaved a long sigh.

‘David, I made nurse let me look at the horrid place this morning. I shall always be a fright—it’s no good.’

But he knew her well enough to perceive that she was not really very downcast, and that she had already devised ways and means of hiding the mark as much as possible.

‘It doesn’t hurt or trouble you at all?’ he asked her anxiously.

‘No, of course not,’ she said impatiently. ‘It’s getting well. Do ask nurse to bring me my tea.’

The nurse brought it, and she and David spoiled their invalid with small attentions.

‘It’s nice being waited on,’ said Lucy when it was over, settling herself to rest with a little sigh of sensuous satisfaction.

Another week passed, and all seemed to be doing well, though Mr. Selby would say nothing as yet of allowing her to move. Then came a night when she was restless; and in the morning the wound troubled her, and she was extremely irritable and depressed. The moment the nurse gave him the news at his door in the early morning, David’s face changed. He

dressed, and went off for Mr. Selby, who came at once.

'Yes,' he said gravely, after his visit, as he shut the folding-doors of Lucy's room behind him—'yes, I am sorry to say there is a return. Now the question is, what to do.'

He came and stood by the fireplace, legs apart, head down, debating with himself. David, haggard and unshorn, watched him helplessly.

'We *could* operate again,' he said thoughtfully, 'but it would cut her about terribly. And I can't disguise from you, Mr. Grieve'—as he raised his head and caught sight of his companion his tone softened insensibly—'that, in my opinion, it would be all but useless. I more than suspect, from my observation to-day, that there are already secondary growths in the lung. Probably they have been there for some time.'

There was silence.

'Then we can do nothing,' said David.

'Nothing effectual, alas!' said the doctor, slowly. 'Palliatives, of course, we can use, of many kinds. But there will not be much pain.'

'Will it be long?'

David was standing with his back to the doctor, looking out of window, and Mr. Selby only just heard the words.

'I fear it will be a rapid case,' he said reluctantly. 'This return is rapid, and there are many indications this morning I don't like. But don't wish it prolonged, my dear sir!—have courage for her and yourself.'

The words were not mere platitudes—the soul of a good man looked from the clear and masterful eyes. He described the directions he had left with the nurse, and promised to come again in the evening. Then he grasped David's hand, and would have gone away

quickly. But David, following him mechanically to the door, suddenly recollected himself.

‘Could we move her?’ he asked; ‘she may crave to get home, or to some warm place.’

‘Yes, you can move her,’ the doctor said, decidedly. ‘With an invalid-carriage and a nurse you can do it. We will talk about it when I come again to-night.’

‘A ghastly case,’ he was saying to himself as he went downstairs, ‘and, thank heaven! a rare one. Strange and mysterious thing it is, with its ghoulish preference for the young. Poor thing! poor thing! and yesterday she was so cheerful—she would tell me all about her boy.’

## CHAPTER IX

THE history of the weeks that followed shall be partly told in David’s own words, gathered from those odds-and-ends of paper, old envelopes, the half-sheets of letters, on which he would write sometimes in those hours when he was necessarily apart from Lucy, thrusting them on his return between the leaves of his locked journal, clinging to them as the only possible record of his wife’s ebbing life, yet passionately avoiding the sight of them when they were once written.

‘RYDAL, AMBLESIDE: *May 5th.*—We arrived this afternoon. The day has been glorious. The mountains round the head of the lake, as we drove along it at a foot’s pace that the carriage might not shake her, stood out in the sun; the light wind drove the cloud-shadows across their blues and purples; the water was a sheet of light; the larches were all out, though other trees are late; and every breath was perfume.

‘But she was too weary to look at it; and before we had gone two miles, it seemed to me that I could think of nothing but the hateful length of the drive, and the ups and downs of the road.

‘When we arrived, she would walk into the cottage, and before nurse or I realised what she was doing, she went straight through the little passage which runs from front to back, out into the garden. She stood a moment—in her shawls, with the little white hood she has devised for herself drawn close round her head and face—looking at the river with its rocks and foaming water, at the shoulder of Nab Scar above the trees, at the stone house with the red blinds opposite.

“‘It looks just the same,” she said, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

‘We brought her in—nurse and I—and when she had been put comfortably on the low couch I had sent from London beforehand, and had taken some food, she was a little cheered. She made us draw her to the window of the little back sitting-room, and she lay looking out till it was almost dark. But as I foresaw, the pain of coming is more than equal to any pleasure there may be.

‘Yet she would come. During those last days in London, when she would hardly speak to us, when she lay in the dark in that awful room all day, and every attempt to feed her or comfort her made her angry, I could not, for a long time, get her to say what she wished about moving, except that she would not go back to Manchester.

‘Her hand-glass could not be kept from her, and one morning she cried bitterly when she saw that she could no longer so arrange her laces as to completely hide the disfigurement of the right side of the face.

“‘No! I will *never* go back to Merton Road!” she

cried, throwing down the glass; "no one shall see me!"

'But at night, after I hoped she was asleep, she sent nurse to say that she wanted to go to—*Rydal*!—to the same cottage by the *Rotha* we had stayed at on our honeymoon. Nurse said she could—she could have an invalid-carriage from door to door. Would I write for the rooms at once? And Sandy could join us there.

'So, after nine years, we are here again. The house is empty. We have our old rooms. Nothing is changed in the valley. After she was asleep, I went out along the river, keeping to a tiny path on the steep right bank till I reached a wooden bridge, and then through a green bit, fragrant with fast-springing grass and flowers, to that point beside the lake I remember so well. I left her there one day, sitting, and dabbling in the water, while I ran up *Loughrigg*. She was nineteen. How she tripped over the hills!

'To-night there was a faint moon. The air was cold, but quite still, and the reflections, both of the islands and of *Nab Scar*, seemed to sink into unfathomed depths of shadowy water. *Loughrigg* rose boldly to my left against the night sky; I could see the rifle-buttocks and the soft blackness of the great larch-plantation on the side of *Silver How*.

'There, to my right, was the tower of the little church, whitish against the woods, and close beside it, amid the trees, I felt the presence of *Wordsworth's* house, though I could not see it.

'O poet! who wrote for me, not knowing—oh, heavenly valley!—you have but one voice; it haunts my ears:—

"Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed,  
The bowers where *Lucy* played;  
And thine, too, is the last green field  
That *Lucy's* eyes surveyed."

'*May 10th.*—She never speaks of dying, and I dare not speak of it. But sometimes she is like a soul wandering in terror through a place of phantoms. Her eyes grow large and strained, she pushes me away from her. And she often wakes at night, sinking in black gulfs of fear, from which I cannot save her.

'Oh, my God! my heart is torn, my life is sickened with pity! Give me some power to comfort—take from me this impotence, this numbness. She, so little practised in suffering, so much of a child still, called to bear this *monstrous* thing. Savage, incredible Nature! But behind Nature there is God.

'To-night she asked me to pray with her—asked it with reproach. "You never say good things to me now!" And I could not explain myself.

'It was in this way. When Dora was with her, she used to read and pray with her. I would not have interfered for the world. When Dora left, I thought she would use the little manual of prayers for the sick that Dora had left behind; the nurse, who is a religious woman, and reads to her a good deal, would have read this whenever she wished. One night I offered to read it to her myself, but she would not let me. And for the rest—in spite of our last talk—I was so afraid of jarring her, of weakening any thought that might have sustained her.

'But to-night she asked me, and for the first time since our earliest married life I took her hand and prayed. Afterwards she lay still, till suddenly her lip began to quiver.

'"I wasn't ever so very bad. I did love you and Sandy, and I did help that girl,—you know—that Dora knew, who went wrong. And I am so ill—*so ill!*"'

'*May 20th.*—A fortnight has passed. Sandy and his nurse are lodging at a house on the hill; every

morning he comes down here, and I take him for a walk. He was very puzzled and grave at first when he saw her, but now he has grown used to her look, and he plays merrily about among the moss-grown rocks beside the river, while she lies in the slung couch, to which nurse and I carry her on a little stretcher, watching him.

‘There was a bright hour this morning. We are in the midst of a spell of dry and beautiful weather, such as often visits this rainy country in the early summer, before any visitors come. The rhododendrons and azaleas are coming out in the gardens under Loughrigg—some little copses here and there are sheets of blue—and the green is rushing over the valley. We had put her among the rocks under a sycamore-tree—a singularly beautiful tree, with two straight stems dividing its rounded masses of young leaf. There were two wagtails perching on the stones in the river, and swinging their long tails; and the light flickered through the trees on to the water foaming round the stones or slipping in brown cool sheets between them. There was a hawthorn-tree in bloom near by; in the garden of the house opposite a woman was hanging out some clothes to dry; the Grasmere coach passed with a clatter, and Sandy with the two children from the lodgings ran out to the bridge to look at it.

‘Yes, she had a moment of enjoyment! I bind the thought of it to my heart. Lizzie was sitting sewing near the edge of the river, that she might look after Sandy. He was told not to climb on to the stones in the current of the stream, but as he was bent on catching the vain, provoking wagtails who strutted about on them, the prohibition was unendurable. As soon as Lizzie’s head was bent over her work, he would clamber in and out till he reached some quite

forbidden rock; and then, looking back with dancing eyes and the tip of his little tongue showing between his white teeth, he would say, "Go on with your work, Nana, *darling!*"—And his mother's look never left him all the time.

'Once he had been digging with his little spade among the fine grey gravel silted up here and there among the hollows of the rocks. He had been digging with great energy, and for May the air was hot. Lizzie looked up and said to him, "Sandy, it's time for me to take you to bed"—that is, for his midday sleep. "Yes," he said, with a languid air, sitting down on a stone with his spade between his knees—"yes, I think I'd better come to bed. My heart is very dreary." "What do you mean?" "My heart is very dreary—dreary means tired, you know." "Oh, indeed!—where is your heart?" "Here," he said, laying his hand lackadaisically on the small of his back.

'And then she smiled, for the first time for so many, many days! I came to sit by her; she left her hand in mine; and after the child was gone the morning slipped by peacefully, with only the sound of the river and the wheels of a few passing carts to break the silence.

'In the afternoon she asked me if I should not have to go back to Manchester. How could all those men and those big printing-rooms get on without me? I told her that John reported to me every other day; that a batch of our best men had sent word to me, through him, that everything was going well, and I was not to worry; that there had been a strike of some importance among the Manchester compositors, but that our men had not joined.

'She listened to it all, and then she shut her eyes and said:—



“I’m glad you did that about the men. I don’t understand quite—but I’m glad.”

“ . . . You can see nothing of her face now in its white draperies but the small, pointed chin and nose; and then the eyes, with their circles of pain, the high centre of the brow, and a wave or two of her pretty hair tangled in the lace edge of the hood.

“*“My darling,—my darling! God have mercy upon us!”*”

‘*June 2nd.*—“*For the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment.*” How profoundly must he who spoke the things reported in this passage have conceived of marriage! *For the hardness of your hearts.* Himself governed wholly by the inward voice, unmoved by the mere external authority of the great Mosaic name, he handles the law presented to him with a sort of sad irony. The words imply the presence in him of a slowly formed and passionately held ideal. Neither sin, nor suffering, nor death can nor ought to destroy the marriage bond, once created. It is not there for our pleasure, nor for its mere natural object,—but to form the soul.

‘The world has marched since that day, in law—still more, as it supposes, in sentiment. But are we yet able to bear such a saying?

‘ . . . Then compare with these words the magnificent outburst in which, a little earlier, he sweeps from his path his mother and his brethren. There are plentiful signs—take the “corban” passage, for instance, still more, the details of the Prodigal Son—of the same deep and tender thinking as we find in the most authentic sayings about marriage applied to the parental and brotherly relation. But he himself, realising, as it would seem, with peculiar poignancy, the sacredness of marriage and the claim of the

family, is yet alone, and must be alone to the end. The fabric of the Kingdom rises before him; his soul burns in the fire of his message; and the lost sheep call.

‘She has been fairly at ease this afternoon, and I have been lying on the grass by the lake, pondering these things. The narrative of Mark, full as it is already of legendary accretion, brings one so close to him; the living breath and tone are in one’s ears.’

‘*June 4th.*—These last two days she is much worse. The local trouble is stationary, but there must be developments we know nothing of elsewhere. For she perishes every day before our eyes—we cannot give her sleep—there is such *malaise*, emaciation, weariness.

‘She is wonderfully patient. It seems to me, looking back, that a few days ago came a change. I cannot remember any words that marked it, but it is as though—without our knowing it—her eyes had turned themselves irrevocably from us and from life, to the hills of death. Yet—strange!—she takes more notice of those about her. Yesterday she showed an interest just like her old self in the children’s going to a little fête at Ambleside. She would have them all in—Sandy and the landlady’s two little girls—to look at them when they were dressed.—What strikes me with awe is that she has no more tears, though she says every now and then the most touching things—things that pierce to the very marrow.

‘She told me to-day that she wished to see her father. I have written to him this evening.’

‘*June 6th.*—Purcell has been here a few hours, and has gone back to-night. She received him with perfect calmness, though they have not spoken to each

other for ten years. He came in with his erect, military port and heavy tread, looking little older, though his hair is grey. But he blenched at sight of her.

"You must kiss me on the forehead," she said to him feebly, "but, please, very gently."

"So he kissed her, and sat down. He cleared his throat often, and did not know what to say. But she asked him, by degrees, about some of her mother's relations whom she had not seen for long, then about himself and his health. The ice thawed, but the talk was difficult. Towards the end he inquired of her—and, I think, with genuine feeling—whether she had "sought salvation." She said faintly, "No;" and he, looking shocked and shaken, bade her, with very much of his old voice and manner, and all the old phraseology, "lay hold of the merits of Jesus."

"Towards the end of his exhortations she interrupted him.

"You must see Sandy, and you must kiss me again. I wasn't a good daughter. But, oh! why wouldn't you make friends with me and David? I tried—you remember I tried?"

"I am ready to forgive all the past," he said, drawing himself up; "I can say no more."

"Well, kiss me!" she said, in a melancholy whisper. And he kissed her again.

"Then I would not let him exhaust her any more, or take any set farewell. I hurried him away as though for tea, and nurse and I pronounced against his seeing her again.

"On our walk to the coach he broke out once more, and implored me, with much unction and some dignity, not to let my infidel opinions stand in the way, but to summon some godly man to see and talk with her. I said that a neighbouring clergyman had been several times to see her, since, as he probably knew,

she had been a Churchwoman for years. In my inward frenzy I seemed to be hurling all sorts of wild sayings at his head; but I don't believe they came to speech, for I know at the end we parted with the civility of strangers. I promised to send him news. What amazed me was his endless curiosity about the details of her illness. He would have the whole history of the operation, and all the medical opinion she could remember from the nurse. And on our walk he renewed the subject; but I could bear it no more.

'Oh, my God! what does it matter to me *why* she is dying?

'Then, when I got home, I found her rather excited, and she whispered to me: "He asked me if I had sought salvation, and I said No. I didn't seek it, David; but it comes—when you are here." Then her chest heaved, but with that strange instinct of self-preservation she would not say a word more, nor would she let me weep. She asked me to hold her hands in mine, and so she slept a little.

'Dora writes that in a fortnight more she can get a holiday of a week or two. Will she be in time?

'It is two months to-day since we went to London.'

On one of the last days in June Dora arrived. It seemed to her that Lucy could have but a few days to live. Working both outwardly and inwardly, the terrible disease had all but done its work. She had nearly lost the power of swallowing, and lived mainly on the morphia injections which were regularly administered to her. But at intervals she spoke a good deal, and quite clearly.

And Dora had not been six hours with her before a curious thing happened. The relation which, ever since their meeting as girls, had prevailed between her and Lucy, seemed to be suddenly reversed. She

was no longer the teacher and sustainer; in the little dying creature there was now a remote and heavenly power; it could not be described, but Dora yielded with tears to the awe and sovereignty of it.

She saw with some plainness, however, that it depended on the relation between the husband and wife. Since she had been with them last, it had been touched—this relation—by a Divine alchemy. The self in both seemed to have dropped away. The two lives were no longer two, but one—he cherishing, she leaning.

The night she came she pressed Lucy to take the Holy Communion. Lucy assented, and the Communion was administered, with David kneeling beside her pillow. But afterwards Lucy was troubled, and when Dora proposed at night to read and pray with her, she said faintly, 'No; David does.' And thenceforward, though she was all gentleness, Dora did not find it very easy to get religious speech with her, and went often—poor Dora!—sadly, and in fear.

Dora had been in the house five days, when new trouble followed on the old. David one morning received a letter from Louie, forwarded from Manchester, and when Dora followed him into the garden with a message, she found him walking about distracted.

'Read it!' he said.

The letter was but a few scrawled lines:—

'Cécile has got diphtheria. Our doctor says so, but he is a devil. I must have another—the best—and there is no money. If she dies, you will never see me again, I swear. I dare say you will think it a good job, but now you know.'

The writing was hardly legible, and the paper had been twisted and crumpled by the haste of the writer.

'What is to be done?' said David, in pale despair. 'Can I leave this house one hour—one minute?'

Then a sudden thought struck him. He looked at Dora with a flash of appeal.

‘Dora, you have been our friend always, and you have been good to Louie. Will you go? I need not say all shall be made easy. I could get John to take you over. He has been several times to Paris for me this last five years, and would be a help.’

That was indeed a struggle for Dora! Her heart clung to these people she loved, and the *dévôte* in her yearned for those last opportunities with the dying, on the hope of which she still fed herself. To go from this deathbed, to that fierce mother, in those horrible surroundings!

But just as she had taught Louie in the old days because David Grieve asked her, so now she went, in the end, because he asked her.

She was to be away six days at least. But the doctor thought it possible she might return to find Lucy alive. David made every possible arrangement—telegraphed to Louie that she was coming; and to John directing him to meet her at Warrington and take her on; wrote out the times of her journey; the address of a *pension* in the Avenue Friedland, kept by an English lady, to which he happened to be able to direct her; and the name of the English lawyer in Paris who had advised him at the time of Louie’s marriage, had done various things for him since, and would, he knew, be a friend in need.

Twelve hours after the arrival of Louie’s letter, Dora tore herself from Lucy. ‘Don’t say good-bye,’ said David, his face working, and to spare him and Lucy she went as though she were just going across the road for the night. David saw her—a white and silent traveller—into the car that was to take her on the first stage of a journey which, apart from everything else, alarmed her provincial imagination. David’s

gratitude threw her into a mist of tears as she drove off. Surely, of all the self-devoted acts of Dora's life, this mission and this leave-taking were not the least!

Lucy heard the wheels roll away. A stony, momentary sense of desolation came over her as this one more strand was cut. But David came in, and the locked lips relaxed. It had been necessary to tell her the reason of Dora's departure. And in the course of the long June evening David gathered from the motion of her face that she wished to speak to him. He bent down to her, and she murmured:—

'Tell Louie I wished I'd been kinder—I pray God will let her keep Cécile. . . . She must come to Manchester again when I'm gone.'

The night-watch was divided between David and the nurse. At five o'clock in the summer morning—brilliant once more after storm and rain—he injected morphia into the poor wasted arm, and she took a few drops of brandy. Then, after a while, she seemed to sleep; and he, stretched on a sofa beside her, and confident of waking at the slightest sound, fell into a light doze.

Lucy woke when the sun was high, rather more than an hour later. Her eyes were teased by a chink in the curtain; she hardly knew what it was, but her dying sense shrank, and she vaguely thought of calling David. But as she lay, propped up, she looked down on him, and she saw his pale, sunken face, with the momentary softening of rest upon it. And there wandered through her mind fragments of his sayings to her in that last evening of theirs together in the Manchester house,—especially, '*It can only be proved by living—by every victory over the evil self.*' In its mortal fatigue her memory soon lost hold of words and ideas; but she had the strength not to wake him.

Then as she lay in what seemed to her this scorch-

ing light—in reality it was one little ray which had evaded the thick curtains—a flood of joy seemed to pour into her soul. ‘I shall not live beyond to-day,’ she thought, ‘but I know now I shall see him again.’

When at last she made a faint movement, and he woke at once, he saw that the end was very near. He thought of Dora in Paris with a pang, but there was no help for it. Through that day he never stirred from her side in the darkened room, and she sank fast. She spoke only one connected sentence—to say with great difficulty, ‘Dying is long—but—not—painful.’ The words woke in him a strange echo; they had been among the last words of ‘Lias, his childhood’s friend. But she breathed one or two names—the landlady of the lodging-house, and the servants, especially the nurse.

They came in on tiptoe and kissed her. She had already thanked each one.

Sandy was just going to bed, when David carried him in to her. One of her last conscious looks was for him. He was in his nightgown, with bare feet, holding his father tight round the neck, and whimpering. They bent down to her, and he kissed her on the cheek, as David told him, ‘very softly.’ Then he cried to go away from this still, grey mother. David gave him to the nurse and came back.

The day passed, and the night began. The doctor in his evening visit said it would be a marvel if she saw the morrow. David sat beside the bed, his head bowed on the hand he held; the nurse was in the farther corner. His whole life and hers passed before him; and in his mind there hovered perpetually the image of the potter and the wheel. He and she—the Hand so unfaltering, so divine had bound them there, through resistance and anguish unspeakable. And



now, for him there was only a sense of absolute surrender and submission, which in this hour of agony and exaltation rose steadily into the ecstasy—ay, the *vision* of faith! In the pitying love which had absorbed his being he had known that 'best' at last whereat his craving youth had grasped; and losing himself wholly had found his God.

And for her, had not her weak life become one flame of love—a cup of the Holy Grail, beating and pulsing with the Divine Life?

The dawn came. She pulled restlessly at her white wrapper—seemed to be in pain—whispered something of 'a weight.' Then the last change came over her. She opened her eyes—but they saw no longer. Nature ceased to resist, and the soul had long since yielded itself. With a meekness and piteousness of look not to be told, never to be forgotten, Lucy Grieve passed away.

## CHAPTER X

THE very day after Lucy had been carried to her last rest in that most poetic of all graveyards which bends its grassy shape to the encircling Rotha and holds in trust the ashes of Wordsworth, David Grieve started for Paris.

He had that morning received a telegram from Dora: 'Louie disappeared. Have no clue. Can you come?' Two days before, the news of Cécile's death from diphtheria had reached him in a letter from poor Dora, rendered almost inarticulate by her grief for Lucy and bitter regret for her own absence from her cousin's deathbed, mingling with her pity for Louie's unfortunate child and her dread and panic with regard to Louie herself.

But so long as that white form lay shrouded in the cottage upper room, he could not move—and he could scarcely feel.

The telegram broke in upon a sort of lethargy which had held him ever since Lucy's last breath. He started at once. On the way he spent two hours at Manchester. On the table in his study there still lay the medical book he had taken down from his scientific shelf on the night of Dr. Mildmay's visit; in Lucy's room her dresses hung as she had left them on the doors; a red woollen cap she had been knitting for Sandy was thrown down half finished on the dressing-table. Of the hour he spent in that room, putting away some of the little personal possessions, still warm as it were from her touch, let no more be said.

When he reached Paris he inquired for Dora at the *pension* in the Avenue Friedland, to which he had sent her. John, who had also written to him, and was still in Paris, was staying, he knew, at an hotel on the Quai Voltaire. But he went to Dora first.

Dora, however, was not at home. She had left for him the full address of the house in the Paris *banlieue* where she had found Louie, and full directions as to how to reach it. He took one of the open cabs and drove thither in the blazing July sun.

An interminable drive!—the whole length of the Avenue de la Grande-Armée and the Avenue de Neuilly, past the Seine and the Rond Pont de Courbevoie, until at last turning to the left into the wide and villainously paved road that leads to Rueil, Bougival, and St. Germain, the driver and David between them with difficulty discovered a side street which answered to the name Dora had several times given.

They had reached one of the most squalid parts of the western *banlieue*. Houses half built and deserted in the middle, perhaps by some bankrupt builder;

small traders, bakers, *charcutiers*, fried-fish sellers, lodged in structures of lath and plaster, just run up and already crumbling; *cabarets* of the roughest and meanest kind, adorned with high-sounding devices,—David mechanically noticed one which had blazoned on its stained and peeling front, *A la renaissance du Phénix*;—heaps of rubbish and garbage with sickly children playing among them; here and there some small, ill-smelling factory; a few melancholy shrubs in new-made gardens, drooping and festering under a cruel sun in a scorched and unclean soil:—the place repelled and outraged every sense. Was it here that little Cécile had passed from a life of pain to a death of torture?

He rang at a sinister and all but windowless house, which he was able to identify from Dora's directions. John opened to him, and in a little room to the right, which looked on to a rank bit of neglected garden, he found Dora. A woman, with a scowling brow and greedy mouth, disappeared into the back premises as he entered.

Dora and he clasped hands. Then the sight of his face broke down even her long-practised self-control, and she laid her head down on the table and sobbed. But he showed little emotion; while John, standing shyly on the other side of the room, and the weeping Dora could hardly find words to tell their own story, so overwhelmed were they by those indelible signs upon him of all that he had gone through.

He asked them rapidly a number of questions.

In the first place Dora explained that she and John were engaged in putting together whatever poor possessions the house contained of a personal kind, that they might not either be seized for debt, or fall into the claws of the old *bonne*, a woman of the lowest type, who had already plundered all she could. As

to the wretched husband, very little information was forthcoming. John believed that he had been removed to the hospital in a state of alcoholic paralysis the very week that Cécile was taken ill; at any rate he had made no sign.

The rest of the story which Dora had to tell may be supplemented by a few details which were either unknown to his informants, or remained unknown to David.

Louie, on her return to Paris with David's hundred pounds, had promptly staked the greater part of it in certain Bourse speculations. She was quite as sorely in need of money as she had professed to be while in Manchester, but for more reasons than one, as David had uncomfortably suspected. Not only did her husband strip her of anything he could lay hands on, but a certain fair-haired Alsatian artist a good deal younger than herself had for some months been preying upon her. What his hold upon her precisely was, Father Lenoir, her director, when David went to see him, either could not or—because the matter was covered by the confessional seal—would not say. The artist, Brénart by name, was a handsome youth, with a droll facile tongue, and a recklessness of temper matching her own. He became first known to her as one of her husband's drinking companions, then, dazzled by the wife's mad beauty, he began to haunt the handsome Madame Montjoie, as many other persons had haunted her before him,—with no particular results except to increase the arrogant self-complacency with which Louie bore herself among her Catholic friends.

In the first year of his passion, Brénart came into a small inheritance, much of which he spent on jewellery and other presents for his idol. She accepted them without scruple, and his hopes naturally rose high. But in a few months he ran through his money, his

drinking habits, under Montjoie's lead, grew upon him, and he fell rapidly into a state of degradation which would have made it very easy for Louie to shake him off, had she been so minded.

But by this time he had, no doubt, a curious spell for her. He was a person of considerable gifts, an etcher of fantastic promise, a clever musician, and the owner of a humorous *carillon* of talk, to quote M. Renan's word, which made life in his neighbourhood perpetually amusing for those, at any rate, who took the grossness of its themes as a matter of course. Louie found on the one hand that she could not do without him, in her miserable existence; on the other that if he was not to starve she must keep him. His misfortunes revealed the fact that there was neither chivalry nor delicacy in him; and he learnt to live upon her with surprising quickness, and on the most romantic pretexts.

So she made her pilgrimage to Manchester for money, and then she played with her money to make it more, on the Bourse. But clever as she was, luck was against her, and she lost. Her losses made her desperate. So too did the behaviour of her husband, who robbed her whenever he could, and spent most of his time on the pavements of Paris, dragging himself from one low drinking-shop to another, only coming home to cheat her out of fresh supplies, and goad his wife to hideous scenes of quarrel and violence, which frightened the life out of Cécile. Brénart, whom she could no longer subsidise, kept aloof, for mixed reasons of his own. And the landlord, not to be trifled with any longer, gave them summary notice of eviction.

While she was in these straits, Father Lenoir, who even during these months of vacillating passion and temptation had exercised a certain influence over her, came to call upon her one afternoon, being made

anxious by her absence from Ste. Eulalie. He found a wild-eyed haggard woman in a half-dismantled apartment, whom, for the first time, he could not affect by any of those arts of persuasion or rebuke, in which his long experience as a guide of souls had trained him. She would tell him nothing either about her plans, or her husband; she did not respond to his skilful and reproachful comments upon her failure to give them assistance in a recent great function at Ste. Eulalie; nor was she moved by the tone of solemn and fatherly exhortation into which he gradually passed. He left her, fearing the worst.

On the following morning she fled to the wretched house on the outskirts of Paris where Dora had found her. She went thither to escape from her husband; to avoid the landlord's pursuit; to cut herself adrift from the clergy of Ste. Eulalie, and to concert with Brénart a new plan of life. But Brénart failed to meet her there, and, a very few days after the flight, Cécile, already worn to a shadow, sickened with diphtheria. Either the seeds were already in her when they left Paris, or she was poisoned by the half-finished drainage and general insanitary state of the quarter to which they had removed.

From the moment the child took to her bed, Louie fell into the blackest despair. She had often ill-used her daughter during these last months; the trembling child, always in the house, had again and again been made the scapegoat of her mother's miseries; but she no sooner threatened to die than Louie threw everything else in the world aside and was madly determined she should live.

She got a doctor, of an inferior sort, from the neighbourhood, and when he seemed to her to bungle, and the child got no better, she drove him out of the house with contumely. Then she herself tried to

caustic Cécile's throat, or she applied some of the old-wives' remedies, suggested by the low servant she had taken. The result was that the poor little victim was brought to the edge of the grave, and Louie, reduced to abjectness, went and humbled herself to the doctor and brought him back. This time he told her bluntly that the child was dying and nothing could save her. Then, in her extremity, she telegraphed for David. Her brother had written to her twice since the beginning of Lucy's illness; but when she sent her telegram, all remembrance of her sister-in-law had vanished from Louie's mind—Lucy might never have existed; and whether she was alive or dead mattered nothing.

When Dora came, she found the child speechless, and near the end. Tracheotomy had been performed, but its failure was already clear. It seemed a question of hours. John went off post-haste for a famous doctor. The great man came, agreed with the local practitioner that nothing more could be done, and that death was imminent. Louie, beside herself, first turned and rent him, and then fell in a dead faint beside Cécile's bed. While the nurse, whom John had also brought from Paris, was tending both mother and daughter, Dora sent John—who in these years had acquired a certain smattering of foreign languages under the pressure of printing-room needs and David's counsel—to inquire for and fetch a priest. She was in an agony lest the child should die without the sacraments of her Church.

The priest came—a young man of a heavy peasant type—bearing the Host. Never did Dora forget that scene—the emaciated child gasping her life away, the strange people, dimly seen amid the wreaths of incense, who seemed to her to have flocked in from the street in the wake of the priest, to look—the sacred words and gestures in the midst, which, because of the

quick unintelligible Latin, she could only follow as a mystery of ineffable and saving power, the same, so she believed, for Anglican and Catholic—and by the bedside the sullen erect form of the mother, who could not be induced to take any part whatever in the ceremony.

But when it was all over, and the little procession which had brought the Host was forming once more, Louie thrust Dora and the nurse violently away from the bed, and bent her ear down to Cécile's mouth. She gave a wild and hideous cry; then drawing herself to her full height, with a tragic magnificence of movement she stretched out one shaking hand over the poor little wasted body, while with the other she pointed to the priest in his white officiating dress.

'Go out of this house!—go this *instant!* Who brought you in? Not I! I tell you,—last night'—she flung the phrases out in fierce gasps—'I gave God the chance. I said to Him, Make Cécile well, and I'll behave myself—I'll listen to Father Lenoir. Much good I've got by it all this time!—but I will. I'll live on a crust, and I'll give all I can skin and scrape to those people at Ste. Eulalie. If not—then I'll go to the devil—to *the devil!* Do you hear? I swore that.'

Her voice sank to a hoarse whisper; she bent down, still keeping everyone at bay and at a distance from her dead child,—though Dora ran to her—her head turned over her shoulder, her glowing eyes of hatred fixed upon the priest.

'She is mad!' he said to himself, receding quickly, lest the sacred burden he bore should suffer any indignity.

At that moment she fell heavily on her knees beside the bed insensible, her dark head lying on Cécile's arm. Dora, in a pale trance of terror, closed little Cécile's



weary eyes, the nurse cleared the room, and they laid Louie on her bed.

When she revived, she crawled to the place where Cécile lay in her white grave dress strewn with flowers, and again put everyone away, locking herself in with the body. But the rules of interment in the case of infectious diseases are strict in France; the authorities concerned intervened; and after scenes of indescribable misery and violence, the little corpse was carried away, and, thanks to Dora's and John's care, received tender and reverent burial.

The mother was too exhausted to resist any more. When Dora came back from the funeral, the nurse told her that Madame Montjoie, after having refused all meat or drink for two days, had roused herself from what seemed the state of stupor in which the departure of the funeral procession had left her, had asked for brandy, which had been given her, and had then, of her own accord, swallowed a couple of opium pills, which the doctor had so far vainly prescribed for her, and was now heavily asleep.

Dora went to her own bed, too tired to stand, yet inexpressibly relieved. Her bed was a heap of wraps contrived for her by the nurse on the floor of the lower room—a bare den, reeking of damp, which called itself the *salon*. But she had never rested anywhere with such helpless thankfulness. For some hours at least, agony and conflict were still, and she had a moment in which to weep for Lucy, the news of whose death had now lain for two days a dragging weight at her heart. Hateful memory!—she had forced her way in to Louie with the letter, thinking in her innocence that the knowledge of the brother's bereavement must touch the sister, or at least momentarily divert her attention; and Louie had dashed it down with the incon-

ceivable words,—Dora's cheek burnt with anguish and shame, as she tried to put them out of her mind for ever,—

‘Very well. Now, then, you can marry him! You know you’ve always wanted to!’

But at last that biting voice was hushed; there was not a sound in the house; the summer night descended gently on the wretched street, and in the midst of anxious discussion with herself as to how she and John were to get Louie to England, she fell asleep.

When Dora awoke, Louie was not in the house. After a few hours of opium-sleep, she must have noiselessly put together all her valuables and money, a few trifles belonging to Cécile, and a small parcel of clothes, and have then slipped out through the garden door, and into a back lane or track, which would ultimately lead her down to the bank of the river. None of the three other persons sleeping in the house—Dora, the nurse, the old *bonne*, had heard a sound.

When John arrived in the morning, his practical common sense suggested a number of measures for Louie's pursuit, or for the discovery of her fate, should she have made away with herself, as he more than suspected—measures which were immediately taken by himself, or by the lawyer, Mr. O'Kelly.

Everything had so far been in vain. No trace of the fugitive—living or dead—could be found.

David, sitting with his arms on the deal table in the lower room, and his face in his hands, listened in almost absolute silence to the main facts of the story. When he looked up, it was to say, ‘Have you been to Father Lenoir?’

No. Neither Dora nor John knew anything of Father Lenoir.

David went off at once. The good priest was deeply

touched and overcome by the story, but not astonished. He first told David of the existence of Brénart, and search was instantly made for the artist. He, too, was missing, but the police, whose cordial assistance David, by the help of Lord Driffield's important friends in Paris, was able to secure, were confident of immediate discovery. Day after day passed, however; innumerable false clues were started; but at the end of some weeks Louie's fate was as much of a secret as ever.

Dora and John had, of course, gone back to England directly after David's arrival; and he now felt that his child and his work called him. He returned home towards the middle of August, leaving the search for his sister in Mr. O'Kelly's hands.

For five months David remained doggedly at his work in Prince's Street. John watched him silently from day to day, showing him a quiet devotion which sometimes brought his old comrade's hand upon his shoulder in a quick touch of gratitude, or a flash to eyes heavy with broken sleep. The winter was a bad one for trade; the profits made by Grieve & Co., even on much business, were but small; and in the consultative council of employés which David had established the chairman constantly showed a dreaminess or an irritability in difficult circumstances which in earlier days would have cost him influence and success. But the men, who knew him well, looked at each other askance, and either spoke their minds or bore with him as seemed best. They were well aware that while wages everywhere else had been cut down, theirs were undiminished; that the profits from the second-hand book trade which remained nominally outside the profit-sharing partnership were practically all spent in furthering the social ends of it; and that the master,

in his desolate house, with his two maid-servants, one of them his boy's nurse, lived as modestly as any of them, yet with help always to spare for the sick and the unfortunate. To a man they remained loyal to the firm and the scheme; but among even the best of them there was a curious difference of opinion as to David and his ways. They profited by them, and they would see him through; but there was an uncomfortable feeling that, if such ideas were to spread, they might cut both ways and interfere too much with the easy living which the artisan likes and desires as much as any other man.

Meanwhile, those who have followed the history of David Grieve with any sympathy will not find it difficult to believe that this autumn and winter were with him a time of intense mental anguish and depression. The shock and tragedy of Louie's disappearance following on the prolonged nervous exhaustion caused by Lucy's struggle for life had brought him into a state similar to that in which his first young grief had left him; only with this difference, that the nature being now deeper and richer was but the more capable of suffering. The passion of religious faith which had carried him through Lucy's death had dwindled by natural reaction; he believed, but none the less he walked in darkness. The cruelty of his wife's fate, meditated upon through lonely and restless nights, tortured beyond bearing a soul made for pity; and every now and then wild fits of remorse for his original share in Louie's sins and misfortunes would descend upon him, and leave no access to reason.

His boy, his work and his books, these were ultimately his protections from himself. Sandy climbed about him, or got into mischief with salutary frequency. The child slept beside his father at night, and in the evenings was always either watching for

him at the gate or standing thumb in mouth with his face pressed against the window, and his bright eye scanning the dusk.

For the rest, after a first period of utter numbness and languor, David was once more able to read, and he read with voracity—science, philosophy, *belles lettres*. Two subjects, however, held his deepest mind all through, whatever might be added to them—the study of ethics, in their bearing upon religious conceptions, and the study of Christian origins. His thoughts about them found occasional outlet, either in his talks with Ancrum—whose love soothed him, and whose mind, with all its weaknesses and its strong Catholic drift, he had long found to be infinitely freer and more hospitable in the matter of ideas than the average Anglican mind—or in his journal.

A few last extracts from the journal may be given. It should be remembered that the southern element in him made such a mode of expression more easy and natural to him than it ever can be to most Englishmen.

‘*November 2nd.*—It seems to me that last night was the first night since she died that I have not dreamt of her. As a rule, I am always with her in sleep, and for that reason I am the more covetous of the sleep which comes to me so hardly. It is a second life. Yet before her illness, during our married life, I hardly knew what it was to dream.

‘Two nights ago I thought I was standing beside her. She was lying on the long couch under the sycamore tree whither we used to carry her. At first, everything was wholly lifelike and familiar. Sandy was somewhere near. She had the grey camel’s hair shawl over her shoulders, which I remember so well, and the white frilled cap drawn loosely together under

her chin, over bandages and dressings, as usual. She asked me to fetch something for her from the house, and I went, full of joy. There seemed to be a strange mixed sense at the bottom of my heart that I had somehow lost her and found her again.

‘When I came back, nurse was there, and everything was changed. Nurse looked at me with meaning, startled eyes, as much as to say, “Look closely, it is not as you think.” And as I went up to her, lying still and even smiling on her couch, there was an imperceptible raising of her little white hand as though to keep me off. Then in a flash I saw that it was not my living Lucy; that it could only be her spirit. I felt an awful sense of separation and yet of yearning; sitting down on one of the mossy stones beside her, I wept bitterly, and so woke, bathed in tears.

‘. . . It has often seemed to me lately that certain elements in the Resurrection stories may be originally traced to such experiences as these. I am irresistibly drawn to believe that the strange and mystic scene beside the lake, in the appendix chapter to the Gospel of St. John, arose in some such way. There is the same mixture of elements—of the familiar with the ghostly, the trivial with the passionate and exalted—which my own consciousness has so often trembled under in these last visionary months. The well-known lake, the old scene of fishers and fishing-boats, and on the shore the mysterious figure of the Master, the same, yet not the same, the little, vivid, dream-like details of the fire of coals, the broiled fish, and bread, the awe and longing of the disciples—it is borne in upon me with extraordinary conviction that the whole of it sprang, to begin with, from the dream of grief and exhaustion. Then, in an age which attached a peculiar and mystical importance to dreams, the beautiful thrilling fancy passed from mouth to mouth,

became almost immediately history instead of dream,—just as here and there a parable misunderstood has taken the garb of an event,—was after a while added to and made more precise in the interest of apologetics, or of doctrine, or of the simple love of elaboration, and so at last found a final resting-place as an epilogue to the fourth Gospel.'

'*November 4th.*—To-night I have dared to read again Browning's "Rabbi ben Ezra." For months I have not been able to read it, or think of it, though for days and weeks towards the end of her life it seemed to be graven on my heart.

Look not thou down, but up !  
To uses of a cup,  
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,  
The new wine's foaming glow,  
The Master's lips a-glow !  
Thou heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with  
earth's wheel ?

'Let me think again, my God, of that astonishing ripening of her last days !—of all her little acts of love and gratitude towards me, towards her nurse, towards the people in the house, who had helped to tend her—of her marvellous submission, when once the black cloud of the fear of death, and the agony of parting from life had left her.

'And such facts alone in the world's economy are to have no meaning, point no-whither? I could as soon believe it as that, in the physical universe, the powers of the magnet, or the flash of the lightning, are isolated and meaningless—tell us nothing and lead nowhere.'

'*November 10th.*—In the old days—there is a passage of the kind in an earlier part of this journal—I was

constantly troubled, and not for myself only, but for others, the poor and unlearned especially, who, as it seemed to me, would lose most in the crumbling of the Christian mythology—as to the intellectual difficulties of the approach to God. All this philosophical travail of two thousand years—and so many doubts and dark-nesses! A world athirst for preaching, and nothing simple or clear to preach—when once the miracle-child of Bethlehem had been dispossessed. And *now* it is daylight-plain to me that in the simplest act of loving self-surrender there is the germ of all faith, the essence of all lasting religion. Quicken human service, purify and strengthen human love, and have no fear but that the conscience will find its God! For all the time this quickening and this purification are His work in thee. Around thee are the institutions, the ideals, the knowledge and beliefs, ethical or intellectual, in which that work, that life, have been so far fragmentarily and partially realised. Submit thyself and press forward. Thou knowest well what it means to be *better*: more pure, more loving, more self-denying. And in thy struggle to be all these, God cometh to thee and abides. . . . *But the greatest of these is love!*

‘*November 20th.*—To-day I have finished the last of my New Testament tracts, the last at any rate for a time. While Ancrum lives I have resolved to suspend them. They trouble him deeply; and I, who owe him so much, will not voluntarily add to his burden. His wife is with him, a somewhat heavy, dark-faced woman, with a slumbrous eye, which may, however, be capable of kindling. They have left Mortimer Street, and have gone to live in a little house on the road to Cheadle. He seems perfectly happy, and though the doctor is discouraging, I at least can see no change for the worse. She sits by him and reads or works, with-



out much talking, but is all the time attentive to his lightest movement. Friends send them flowers which brighten the little house, his "boys" visit him in the evenings, he is properly fed, and altogether I am more happy about him than I have been for long. It required considerable courage, this move, on her part; for there are a certain number of people still left who knew Ancrum at college, and remember the story; and those who believed him a bachelor are of course scandalised and wondering. But the talk, whatever it is, does not seem to molest them much. He offered to leave Manchester, but she would not let him. "What would he do away from you and his boys?" she said to me. There is a heroism in it all the same.

'... So my New Testament work may rest a while.—During these autumn weeks, it has helped me through some terrible hours.

'When I look back over the mass of patient labour which has accumulated during the present century round the founder of Christianity and the origins of his society—when I compare the text-books of the day with the text-books of sixty years ago—I no longer wonder at the empty and ignorant arrogance with which the French eighteenth century treated the whole subject. The first stone of the modern building had not been laid when Voltaire wrote, unless perhaps in the Wolfenbüttel fragments. He knew, in truth, no more than the Jesuits, much less in fact than the better men among them.

'... It has been like the unravelling of a piece of fine and ancient needlework—and so discovering the secrets of its make and craftsmanship. A few loose ends were first followed up; then gradually the whole tissue has been involved, till at last the nature and quality of each thread, the purpose and the skill of

each stitch, are becoming plain, and what was mystery rises into knowledge.

‘. . . But how close and fine a web!—and how difficult and patient the process by which Christian *reality* has to be grasped! There is no short cut—one must toil.

‘But after one has toiled, what are the rewards? Truth first—which is an end in itself and not a means to anything beyond. Then—the great figure of Christianity given back to you—with something at least of the first magic, the first “natural truth” of look and tone. Through and beyond dogmatic overlay, and Messianic theory and wonder-loving addition, to recover, at least fragmentarily, the actual voice, the first meaning, which is also the eternal meaning, of Jesus—Paul—“John”!

‘Finally—a conception of Christianity in which you discern once more its lasting validity and significance—its imperishable place in human life. It becomes simply that preaching of the Kingdom of God which belongs to and affects you—you, the modern European—just as Greek philosophy, Stoic or Cynic, was that preaching of it which belonged to and affected Epictetus.’

‘*November 24th.*—Mr. O’Kelly writes to me to-day his usual hopeless report. No news! I do not even know whether she is alive, and I can do nothing—absolutely nothing.

‘Yes—let me correct myself, there is *some* news—of an event which, if we could find her, might simplify matters a little. Montjoie is dead in hospital—at the age of thirty-six—

‘Is there *any* other slavery and chain like that of temperament? As I look back on the whole course of my relation to Louie, I am conscious only of a sicken-

ing sense of utter failure. Our father left her to me, and I have not been able to hold her back from—nay, I have helped to plunge her into the most obvious and commonplace ruin. Yet I am always asking myself, if it were to do again, could I do any better? Has any other force developed in me which would make it possible for me *now* to break through the barriers between her nature and mine, to love her sincerely, asking for nothing again, to help her to a saner and happier life?

‘If sometimes I dream that so it is, it is to *her* I owe it—to *her* whom I carry on my bosom, and whose hand did once, or so it seemed, unlock to me the gates of God. *Lucy! my Lucy!*

‘. . . All my past life becomes sometimes intolerable to me. I can see nothing in it that is not tarnished and flecked with black stains of egotism, pride, hardness, moral indolence.

‘And the only reparation possible, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds,” at which my fainting heart sinks.

‘Sometimes I find much comfort in the saying of a lonely thinker, “Let us humbly accept from God even our own nature; not that we are called upon to accept the evil and the disease in us, but let us accept *ourselves* in spite of the evil and the disease.”

‘*Que vivre est difficile—ô mon cœur fatigué!*’

## CHAPTER XI

By the end of December David Grieve was near breaking down. Dr. Mildmay insisted brusquely on his going away.

‘As far as I can see you will live to be an old man,’

he said, 'but if you go on like this, it will be with shattered powers. You are driving yourself to death, yet at the present moment you have no natural driving force. It is all artificial, a matter of will. Do, for heaven's sake, get away from these skies and these streets, and leave all work and all social reforms behind. The first business of the citizen—prate as you like!—is to keep his nerves and his digestion in going order.'

David laughed and yielded. The advice, in fact, corresponded to an inward thirst, and had, moreover, a coincidence to back it. In one of the Manchester papers two or three mornings before he had seen the advertisement of a farm to let, which had set vibrating all his passion for and memory of the moorland. It was a farm about half a mile from Needham Farm, on one of the lower slopes of Kinder Low. It had belonged to a peasant owner, lately dead. The heirs wished to sell, but failing a purchaser were willing to let on a short lease.

It was but a small grazing farm, and the rent was low. David went to the agent, took it at once, and in a few days, to the amazement of Reuben and Hannah, to whom he wrote only the night before he arrived, he and Sandy, and a servant, were established with a minimum of furniture, but a sufficiency of blankets and coals, in two or three rooms of the little grey-walled house.

'Well, it caps me, it do!' Hannah said to herself, in her astonishment as she stood on her own doorstep the day after the arrival, and watched the figures of David and Sandy disappearing along the light crisp snow of the nearer fields in the direction of the Red Brook and the sheep-fold. They had looked in to ask for Reuben, and had gone in pursuit of him.

What on earth should make a man in the posses-

sion of his natural senses leave a warm town-house in January, and come to camp in 'owd Ben's' farm, was, indeed, past Hannah's divination. In reality, no sudden resolve could have been happier. Sandy was a hardy little fellow, and with the first breath of the moorland wind David felt a load, which had been growing too heavy to bear, lifting from his breast. His youth, his manhood, reasserted themselves. The bracing clearness of what seemed to be the setting-in of a long frost put a new life into him; winter's 'bright and intricate device' of ice-fringed stream, of rimy grass, of snow-clad moor, of steel-blue skies, filled him once more with natural joy, carried him out of himself. He could not keep himself indoors; he went about with Reuben or the shepherd, after the sheep; he fed the cattle at Needham Farm, and brought his old knowledge to bear on the rearing of a sickly calf; he watched for the grouse, or he carried his pockets full of bread for the few blackbirds or moor-pippits that cheered his walks into the fissured solitudes of the great Peak plateau, walks which no one to whom every inch of the ground was not familiar dared have ventured, seeing how misleading and treacherous even light snow-drifts may become in the black bog-land of these high and lonely moors; or he toiled up the side of the Scout with Sandy on his back, that he might put the boy on one of the boulders beside the top of the Downfall, and, holding him fast, bid him look down at the great icicles which marked its steep and waterless bed, gleaming in the short-lived sun.

The moral surroundings, too, of the change were cheering. There, over the brow, in the comfortable little cottage, where he had long since placed her, with a woman to look after her, was Margaret—quite childish and out of her mind, but happy and well cared for. He and Sandy would trudge over from time to time to

see her, he carrying the boy in a plaid slung round his shoulders when the snow was deep. Once Sandy went to Frimley with the Needham Farm shepherd, and when David came to fetch him he found the boy and Margaret playing cat's-cradle together by the fire, and the eagerness in Sandy's pursed lip, and on the ethereally blanched and shrunken face of Margaret, brought the tears to David's eyes, as he stood smiling and looking on. But she did not suffer; for memory was gone; only the gentle 'imperishable child' remained.

And at Needham Farm he had never known the atmosphere so still. Reuben was singularly cheerful and placid. Whether by the mere physical weakening of years, or by some slow softening of the soul, Hannah and her ways were no longer the daily scourge and perplexity to her husband they had once been. She was a harsh and tyrannous woman still, but not now openly viperish or cruel. With the disappearance of old temptations, the character had, to some extent, righted itself. Her sins of avarice and oppression towards Sandy's orphans had raised no Nemesis that could be traced, either within or without. It is doubtful whether she ever knew what self-reproach might mean; in word, at any rate, she was to the end as loudly confident as at the first. Nevertheless it might certainly be said that at sixty she was a better and more tolerable human being than she had been at fifty.

'Aye, if yo do but live long enoof, yo get past t' bad bits o' t' road,' Reuben said one night, with a long breath, to David, and then checked himself, brought up either by a look at his nephew's mourning dress, or by a recollection of what David had told him of Louie the night before.

It troubled Reuben indeed, something in the old

fashion, that his wife would show no concern whatever for Louie when he repeated to her the details of that disappearance whereof so far he and she had known only the bare fact.

'Aye, I thowt she 'd bin and married soom mak o' rabblement,' remarked Hannah. 'Yo doant suppose ony decent mon ud put up wi her. What Davy wants wi lookin for her I doant know. He'll be hard-set when he's fand her, I should think.'

She was equally impervious and sarcastic with regard to David's social efforts. Her sharp tongue exercised itself on the 'poor way' in which he seemed to live, and when Reuben repeated to her, with some bewilderment, the facts which she had egged him on to get out of David, her scorn knew no bounds.

'Weel, it's like t' Bible after aw, Hannah,' said Reuben, perplexed and remonstrating; 'theer's things, yo'll remember, abeawt gien t' coat off your back, an sellin aw a mon has, an th' loike, at fairly beats me soomtimes.'

'Oh—go long wi yo!' said Hannah in high wrath. 'He an his loike 'll mak a halliblash of us aw soon, wi their silly faddle, an pamperin o' workin men, wha never wor an never will be noa better nor they should be. But—thank the Lord—I'll not be theer to see.'

And after this communication she found it very difficult to treat David civilly.

But to David's son—to Sandy—Hannah Grieve capitulated, for the first and only time in her life.

On the second and third day after his arrival, Sandy came over with the servant to ask Hannah's help in some small matter of the new household. As they neared the farm door, Tim, the aged Tim, who was slouching behind, was suddenly set upon by a new and ill-tempered collie of Reuben's, who threatened very soon to shake the life out of his poor-toothless

victim. But Sandy, who had a stick, rushed at him, his cheeks and eyes glowing with passion.

‘Get away! you great big dog, you! and leave my middle-sized dog alone!’

And he belaboured and pulled at the collie, without a thought of fear, till the farm-man and Hannah came and separated the combatants,—stalking into the farm kitchen afterwards in a speechless rage at the cowardly injustice which had been done to Tim. As he sat in the big rocking-chair, fiercely cuddling Tim and sucking his thumb, his stormy breath subsiding by degrees, Hannah thought him, as she confessed to the only female friend she possessed in the world, ‘the pluckiest and bonniest little grig i’ th’ coountry side.’

Thenceforward, so far as her queer temper would allow, she became his nurse and slave, and David, with all the memorials of his own hard childhood about him, could not believe his eyes, when he found Sandy established day after day in the Needham Farm kitchen, sucking his thumb in a corner of the settle, and ordering Hannah about with the airs of a three-tailed bashaw. She stuffed him with hot girdle-cakes; she provided for him a store of ‘humbugs,’ the indigenous sweet of the district, which she made and baked with her own hands, and had not made before for forty years; she took him about with her, ‘rootin,’ as she expressed it, after the hens and pigs and the calves; till, Sandy’s exactions growing with her compliance, the common fate of tyrants overtook him. He one day asked too much and his slave rebelled. David saw him come in one afternoon, and found him a minute or two after viciously biting the blind-cord in the parlour, in a black temper. When his father inquired what was the matter, Sandy broke out in a sudden wail of tears.



‘Why *can’t* she be a Kangawoo when I want her to?’

Whereupon David, with the picture of Hannah’s grim figure, cap and all, before his mind’s eye, went into the first fit of side-shaking laughter that had befallen him for many and many a month.

On a certain gusty afternoon towards the middle of February, David was standing alone beside the old Smithy. The frost, after a temporary thaw, had set in again, there had been tolerably heavy snow the night before, and it was evident from the shifting of the wind and the look of the clouds that were coming up from the north-east over the Scout that another fall was impending. But the day had been fine, and the sun, setting over the Cheshire hills, threw a flood of pale rose into the white bosom of the Scout and on the heavy clouds piling themselves above it. It was a moment of exquisite beauty and wildness. The sunlit snow gleamed against the stormy sky; the icicles lining the steep channel of the Downfall shone jagged and rough between the white and smoothly rounded banks of moor, or the snow-wreathed shapes of the grit boulders; to his left was the murmur of the Red Brook creeping between its frozen banks; while close beside him about twenty of the moor sheep were huddling against the southern wall of the Smithy in prescience of the coming storm. Almost within reach of his stick was the pan of his childish joy, the water left in it by the December rains frozen hard and white; and in the crevice of the wall he had just discovered the mouldering remains of a toy-boat.

He stood and looked out over the wide winter world, rejoicing in its austerity, its solemn beauty. Physically he was conscious of recovered health; and

in the mind also there was a new energy of life and work. Nature seemed to say to him, 'Do but keep thy heart open to me, and I have a myriad aspects and moods wherewith to interest and gladden and teach thee to the end;' while, as his eye wandered to the point where Manchester lay hidden on the horizon, the world of men, of knowledge, of duty, summoned him back to it with much of the old magic and power in the call. His grief, his love, no man should take from him; but he must play his part.

Yes—he and Sandy must go home—and soon. Yet even as he so decided, the love of the familiar scene, its freedom, its loneliness, its unstainedness, rose high within him. He stood lost in a trance of memory. Here he and Louie had listened to 'Lias; there, far away amid the boulders of the Downfall, they had waited for the witch; among those snow-laden bushes yonder Louie had hidden when she played Jenny Crum for the discomfiture of the prayer-meeting; and it was on the slope at his feet that she had pushed the butter-scotch into his mouth, the one and only sign of affection she had ever given him, that he could remember, in all their forlorn childhood.

As these things rose before him, the moor, the wind, the rising voice of the storm became to him so many channels, whereby the bitter memory of his sister rushed upon him and took possession. Everything spoke of her, suggested her. Then with inexorable force his visualising gift carried him on past her childhood to the scenes of her miserable marriage; and as he thought of her child's death, the desolation and madness of her flight, the mystery of her fate, his soul was flooded once more for the hundredth time with anguish and horror. Here in this place where their childish lives had been so closely intertwined, he could not resign himself for ever to ignorance, to

silence; his whole being went out in protest, in passionate remorseful desire.

The wind was beginning to blow fiercely; the rosy glow was gone; darkness was already falling. Wild gusts swept from time to time round the white amphitheatre of moor and crag; the ghostly sounds of night and storm were on the hills. Suddenly it was to him as though he heard his name called from a great distance—breathed shrilly and lingeringly along the face of the Scout.

*‘David!’*

It was Louie’s voice. The illusion was so strong that, as he raised his hand to his ear, turning towards the Downfall, whence the sound seemed to come, he trembled from head to foot.

*‘David!’*

Was it the call of some distant boy or shepherd? He could not tell, could not collect himself. He sank down on one of the grit-boulders by the snow-wreathed door of the Smithy and sat there long, heedless of the storm and cold, his mind working, a sudden purpose rising and unfolding, with a mysterious rapidity and excitement.

Early on the following morning he made his way down through the deep snow to the station, having first asked Hannah to take charge of Sandy for a day or two; and by the night mail he left London for Paris.

It was not till he walked into Mr. O’Kelly’s office, on the ground floor of a house in the Rue d’Assas, at about eleven o’clock on the next day, that he was conscious of any reaction. Then for a bewildered instant he wondered why he had come, and what he was to say.

But to his amazement the lawyer rose at once, throwing up his hands with the gesture of one who

notes some singular and unexpected stroke of good fortune.

‘This is *most* extraordinary, Mr. Grieve! I have not yet signed the letter on my desk—there it is!—summoning you to Paris. We have discovered Madame Montjoie! As constantly happens, we have been pursuing inquiries in all sorts of difficult and remote quarters, and she is here—at our doors, living for some weeks past, at any rate, without any disguise, at *Barbizon*, of all places in the world! *Barbizon près Fontainebleau*. You know it?’

David sat down.

‘Yes,’ he said, after an instant. ‘I know it. Is he—is that man Brénart there?’

‘Certainly. He has taken a miserable studio, and is making, or pretending to make, some winter studies of the forest. I hear that Madame Montjoie looks ill and worn; the neighbours say the *ménage* is a very uncomfortable one, and not likely to last long. I wish I had better news for you, Mr. Grieve.’

And the lawyer, remembering the handsome hollow-eyed boy of twenty who had first asked his help, studied with irrepressible curiosity the man’s noble storm-beaten look and fast grizzling hair, as David sat before him with his head bent and his hat in his hands.

They talked a while longer, and then David said, rising:

‘Can I get over there to-night? The snow will be deep in the forest.’

‘I imagine they will keep that main road to *Barbizon* open in some fashion,’ said the lawyer. ‘You may find a sledge. Let me know how you speed and whether I can assist you. But, I fear,’—he shrugged his shoulders—‘in the end this wild life *gets into the blood*. I have seen it so often.’

He spoke with the freedom and knowledge of one who had observed Louie Montjoie with some closeness for eleven years. David said nothing in answer; but at the door he turned to ask a question.

‘You can’t tell me anything of the habits of this man—this Brénart?’

‘Stop!’ said the lawyer, after a moment’s thought; ‘I remember this detail—my agent told me that M. Brénart was engaged in some work for ‘D—— et Cie’—he named a great picture-dealing firm on the Boulevard St. Germain, famous for their illustrated books and *éditions de luxe*.—‘He did not hear what it was, but—ah! I remember,—it has taken him occasionally to Paris, or so he says, and it has been these absences which have led to some of the worst scenes between him and your sister. I suppose she put a jealous woman’s interpretation on them. You want to see her alone?—when this man is out of the way? I have an idea: take my card and your own to this person—’ he wrote out an address—‘he is one of the junior partners in “D—— et Cie;” I know him, and I got his firm the sale of a famous picture. He will do me a good turn. Ask him what the work is that M. Brénart is doing, and when he expects him next in Paris. It is possible you may get some useful information.’

David took the card and walked at once to the Boulevard St. Germain, which was close by. He was civilly received by the man to whom O’Kelly had sent him, and learned from him that Brénart was doing for the firm a series of etchings illustrating the forest in winter, and intended to make part of a great book on Fontainebleau and the Barbizon school. They were expecting the last batch from him, were indeed desperately impatient for them. But he was a difficult fellow to deal with—an exceedingly clever artist, but totally untrustworthy. In his last letter to them he had

spoken of bringing the final instalment to them, and returning some corrected proofs by February 16—‘tomorrow, I see,’ said the speaker, glancing at an almanac on his office table. ‘Well, we may get them, and we mayn’t. If we don’t, we shall have to take strong measures. And now, Monsieur, I think I have told you all I can tell you of our relations to M. Brénart.’

David bowed and took his leave. He made his way through the great shop with its picture-covered walls and its floors dotted with stands on which lay exposed the new etchings and engravings of the season. In front of him a lady in black was also making her way to the door and the street. No one was attending her, and instinctively he hurried forward to open the heavy glass door for her. As he did so a sudden sharp presentiment shot through him. The door swung to behind them, and he found himself in the covered entrance of the shop face to face with Elise Delaunay.

The meeting was so startling that neither could disguise the shock of it. He took off his hat mechanically; she grew white and leant against the glass window.

‘You!—how can it be you?’ she said in a quick whisper, then recovering herself—‘Monsieur Grieve, old associations are painful, and I am neither strong—nor—nor stoical. Which way are you walking?’

‘Towards the Rue de Seine,’ he said, thrown into a bewildering mist of memory by her gesture, the crisp agitated decision of her manner. ‘And you?’

‘I also. We will walk a hundred yards together. What are you in Paris for?’

‘I am here on some business of my sister’s,’ he said evasively.

She raised her eyes, and looked at him long and sharply. He, on his side, saw, with painful agitation, that her youth was gone, but not her grace, not her

singular and wilful charm. The little face under her black hat was lined and sallow, and she was startlingly thin. The mouth had lost its colour, and gained instead the hard shrewdness of a woman left to battle with the world and poverty alone; but the eyes had their old plaintive trick; the dead gold of the hair, the rings and curls of it against the white temples, were still as beautiful as they had ever been; and the light form moved beside him with the same quick floating gait.

‘You have grown much older,’ she said abruptly. ‘You look as if you had suffered—but what of that?—*C’est comme tout le monde.*’

She withdrew her look a moment, with a little bitter gesture, then she resumed, drawn on by a curiosity and emotion she could not control.

‘Are you married?’

‘Yes, but my wife is dead.’

She gave a start; the first part of the answer had not prepared her for the second.

‘*Ah, mon Dieu!*’ she said, ‘always grief—*always!* Is it long?’

‘Eight months. I have a boy. And you?—I heard sad news of you once—the only time.’

‘You might well,’ she said, with a half-ironical accent, driving the point of her umbrella restlessly into the crevices of the stones, as they slowly crossed a paved street. ‘My husband is only a cripple, confined to his chair,—I am no longer an artist but an artisan,—I have not painted a *picture* for years,—but what I paint sells for a trifle, and there is soup in the pot—of a sort. For the rest I spend my life in making *tisane*, in lifting weights too heavy for me, and bargaining for things to eat.’

‘But—you are not unhappy!’ he said to her boldly, with a change of tone.

She stopped, struck by the indescribable note in his voice. They had turned into a side street, whither she had unconsciously led him. She stood with her eyes on the ground, then she lifted them once more, and there was in them a faint beautiful gleam, which transformed the withered and sharpened face.

‘You are quite right,’ she said, ‘if he will only live. He depends on me for everything. It is like a child, but it consoles. Adieu!’

That night David found himself in the little *auberge* at Barbizon. He had discovered a sledge to take him across the forest, and he and his driver had pushed their way under a sky of lead and though whirling clouds of fresh sleet past the central beech-wood, where the great boles stood straight and bare amid fantastic masses of drift; through the rock and fir region, where all was white, and the trees drooped under their wintry load; and beneath withered and leaning oaks, throwing gaunt limbs here and there from out the softening effacing mantle of the snow. Night fell when the journey was half over, and as the lights of the sledge flashed from side to side into these lonely fastnesses of cold, how was it possible to believe that summer and joy had ever tabernacled here?

He was received at the inn, as his driver had brought him—with astonishment. But Barbizon has been long accustomed, beyond most places in France, to the eccentricities of the English and American visitor; and being a home of artists, it understands the hunt for ‘impressions,’ and easily puts up with the unexpected. Before a couple of hours were over, David was installed in a freezing room, and was being discussed in the kitchen, where his arrival produced a certain animation, as the usual English madman in quest of a sensation, and no doubt ready to pay for it.



There were, however, three other guests in the inn, as he found, when he descended for dinner. They were all artists—young, noisy, *bons camarades*, and of a rough and humble social type. To them the winter at Barbizon was as attractive as anywhere else. Life at the inn was cheap, and free; they had the digestion of ostriches, eating anything that was put before them, and drinking oceans of red wine at ten sous a litre; on bad days they smoked, fed, worked at their pictures or played coarse practical jokes on each other and the people of the inn; in fine weather there was always the forest to be exploited, and the chance of some happy and profitable inspiration.

They stared at David a good deal during the *biftef*, the black pudding which seemed to be a staple dish of the establishment, and the *omelette aux fines herbes*, which the landlord's wife had added in honour of the stranger. One of them, behind the shelter of his glasses, drew the outline of the Englishman's head and face on the table-cloth, and showed it to his neighbour.

‘Poetical, grand style, *hein?*’

The other nodded carelessly. *Pourtant—l’hiver lui plait,*’ he hummed under his breath, having some lines of Hugo's, which he had chosen as a motto for a picture, running in his head.

After dinner everybody gathered round the great fire, which the servant had piled with logs, while the flames, and the wreaths of smoke from the four pipes alternately revealed and concealed the rough sketches of all sorts—landscape, portrait, *genre*—legacies of by-gone visitors, wherewith the walls of the *salle à manger* were covered. David sat in his corner smoking, ready enough to give an account of his journey across the forest, and to speak when he was spoken to.

As soon as the strangeness of the new-comer had a

little worn off, the three young fellows plunged into a flood of amusing gossip about the storm and the blocking of the roads, the scarcity of food in Barbizon, the place in general, and its inhabitants. David fell silent after a while, stiffening under a presentiment which was soon realised. He heard his sister's wretched lot discussed with shouts of laughter—the chances of Brénart's escape from the mistress he had already wearied of and deceived—the perils of 'la Montjoie's' jealousy. '*Il veut bien se débarrasser d'elle—mais on ne plaisante pas avec une tigresse!*' said one of the speakers. So long as there was information to be got which might serve him he sat motionless, withdrawn into the dark, forcing himself to listen. When the talk became mere scurrility and noise, he rose and went out.

He passed through the courtyard of the inn, and turned down the village street. The storm had gone down, and there were a few stars amid the breaking clouds. Here and there a light shone from the low houses on either hand; the snow, roughly shovelled from the foot pavements, lay piled in heaps along the roadway, the white roofs shone dimly against the wild sky. He passed Madame Pyat's *maisonnette*, pausing a moment to look over the wall. Not a sign of life in the dark building, and, between him and it, great drifts of snow choking up and burying the garden. A little further on, as he knew, lay the goal of his quest. He easily made out the house from Mr. O'Kelly's descriptions, and he lingered a minute, on the footway, under an overhanging roof to look at it. It was just a labourer's cottage standing back a little from the street, and to one side rose a high wooden addition which he guessed to be the studio. Through the torn blind came the light of a lamp, and as he stood there, himself invisible in his patch of darkness,

he heard voices—an altercation, a woman's high shrill note.

Then he crept back to the inn vibrating through all his being to the shame of those young fellows' talk, the incredible difficulty of the whole enterprise. Could he possibly make any impression upon her whatever? What was done was done; and it would be a crime on his part to jeopardise in the smallest degree the wholesome brightness of Sandy's childhood by any rash proposals which it might be wholly beyond his power to carry out.

He carried up a basket of logs to his room, made them blaze, and crouched over them till far into the night. But in the end the doubt and trouble of his mind subsided; his purpose grew clear again. 'It was my own voice that spoke to me on the moor,' he thought, 'the voice of my own best life.'

About eight o'clock, with the first light of the morning, he was roused by bustle and noise under his window. He got up, and, looking out, saw two sledges standing before the inn, in the cold grey light. Men were busy harnessing a couple of horses to each, and there were a few figures, muffled in great coats and carrying bags and wraps, standing about.

'They are going over to Fontainebleau station,' he thought; 'if that man keeps his appointment in Paris to-day, he will go with them.'

As the words passed through his mind, a figure came striding up from the lower end of the street, a young fair-haired man, in a heavy coat lined with sheepskin. His delicately made face—naturally merry and *bon enfant*—was flushed and scowling. He climbed into one of the sledges, complained of the lateness of the start, swore at the ostler, who made him take another seat on the plea that the one he had chosen was engaged, and finally subsided into a moody silence,

pulling at his moustache, and staring out over the snow, till at last the signal was given, and the sledges flew off on the Fontainebleau road, under a shower of snowballs which a group of shivering bright-eyed urchins on their way to school threw after them, as soon as the great whips were at a safe distance.

David dressed and descended.

‘Who was that fair-haired gentleman in the first sledge?’ he casually asked of the landlord who was bringing some smoking hot coffee into the *salle à manger*.

‘That was a M. Brénart, monsieur,’ said the landlord, cheerfully, absorbed all the while in the laying of his table. ‘*C’est un drôle de corps, M. Brénart*. I don’t take to him much myself; and as for madame—*qui n’est pas madame?*’

He shrugged his shoulders, saw that there were no fresh rolls, and departed with concern to fetch them.

David ate and drank. He would give her an hour yet.

When his watch told him that the time was come, he went out slowly, inquiring on the way if there would be any means of getting to Paris later in the day. Yes, the landlord thought a conveyance of some sort could be managed—if monsieur would pay for it!

A few minutes later David knocked at the door of Brénart’s house. He could get no answer at all, and at last he tried the latch. It yielded to his hand, and he went in.

There was no one in the bare kitchen, but there were the remains of a fire, and of a meal. Both the crockery on the table and the few rough chairs and stools the room contained struck him as being in great disorder. There were two doors at the back. One led into a back room which was empty, the other down a

few steps into a garden. He descended the steps and saw the long wooden erection of the studio stretching to his left. There was a door in the centre of its principal wall, which was ajar. He went up to it and softly pushed it open. There, at the further end, huddled over an iron stove, her face buried in her hands, her shoulders shaken with fierce sobs, was Louie.

He closed the door behind him, and at the sound she turned, hastily. When she saw who it was she gave a cry, and, sinking back on her low canvas chair, she lay staring at him, and speechless. Her eyes were red with weeping; her beauty was a wreck; and in face of the despair which breathed from her, and from her miserable surroundings, all doubt, all repulsion, all condemnation fled from the brother's heart. The iron in his soul melted. He ran up to her, and kneeling beside her, he put his arms round her, as he had never done in his life.

'Oh you poor thing—you poor thing!' he cried, scarcely knowing what he said. He took her worn, tear-stained face, and, laying it on his shoulder, he kissed her, breathing incoherent words of pity and consolation.

She submitted a while, helpless with shock and amazement, and still shaken with the tempest of her own passion. But there came a moment when she pushed him away and tried desperately to recover herself.

'I don't know what you want—you're not going to have anything to do with me now—you can't. Let me alone—it will be over soon—one way or the other.'

And she sat upright, one hand clenched on her knees, her frowning brows drawn together, and the tears falling in spite of her intense effort to drive them back.

He found a painter's stool, and sat down by her,

pale and determined. He told her the history of his search; he implored her to be guided by him, to let him take her home to England and Manchester, where her story was unknown, save to Dora and John. He would make a home for her near his own; he would try to comfort her for the loss of her child; they would understand each other better, and the past should be buried.

Louie looked at him askance. Every now and then she ceased to listen to him at all; while, under the kindling of her own thoughts, her wild eyes flamed into fresh rage and agony.

‘Don’t!—leave me alone!’ she broke out at last, springing up. ‘I don’t want your help, I don’t want you; I only want *him*,—and I will have him, or we shall kill each other.’

She paced to and fro, her hands clasped on her breast, her white face setting into a ghastly calm. David gazed at her with horror. This was another note! one which in all their experience of each other he had never heard on her lips before. *She loved this man!*—this mean wretch, who had lived upon her and betrayed her, and, having got from her all she had to give, was probably just about to cast her off into the abyss which yawns for such women as Louie. He had thought of her flight to him before as the frenzy of a nature which must have distraction at any cost from the unfamiliar and intolerable weight of natural grief.

But this!—one moment it cut the roots from hope, the next it nerved him to more vigorous action.

‘You cannot have him,’ he said, steadily and sternly. ‘I have listened to the talk here for your sake—he is already on the point of deserting you—everyone else in this place knows that he is tired of you—that he is unfaithful to you.’

She dropped into her chair with a groan. Even her

energies were spent—she was all but fainting—and her miserable heart knew, with more certainty than David himself did, that all he said was true.

Her unexpected weakness, the collapse of her strained nerves, filled him with fresh hopes. He came close to her again and pleaded, by the memory of her child, of their father—that she would yield, and go away with him at once.

‘What should I do’—she broke in passionately, her sense of opposition of absurdity reviving her, ‘when I get to your hateful Manchester? Go to church and say my prayers! And you? In a week or two, I tell you, you would be sick of having soiled your hands with such *mud* as I am.’

She threw herself back in her chair with a superb gesture, and folded her arms, looking him defiance.

‘Try me,’ he said quietly, while his lip trembled. ‘I am not as I was, Louie. There are things one can only learn by going down—down—into the depths—of sorrow. The night before Lucy died—she could hardly speak—she sent you a message: “I wish I had been kinder—ask her to come to Manchester when I am gone.” I have not seen her die—not seen her whole life turn to love—through such unspeakable suffering—for nothing. Oh Louie—when we submit ourselves to God—when we ask for His life—and give up our own—then and then only, there is peace—and strength. We ourselves are nothing—creatures of passion—miserable—weak—but in Him and through Him—’

His voice broke. He took her cold hand and pressed it tenderly. She trembled, in spite of herself, and closed her eyes.

‘*Don’t*—I know all about that—why did the child die? There is no God—nothing. It’s just talk. I told Him what I’d do—I vowed I’d go to the bad, for good and all—and I have. There—let me alone!’

But he only held her hand tighter.

‘No!—never! Your trouble was awful—in might well drive you mad. But others have suffered, Louie—no less—and yet have believed—have hoped. It is not beyond our power—for it has been done again and again!—by the most weak, the most miserable. Oh! think of that—tear yourself first from the evil life—and you, too, will know what it is to be consoled—to be strengthened. The mere effort to come with me—I promise it you!—will bring you healing and comfort. We make for ourselves the promise of eternal life, by turning to the good. Then the hope of recovering our dear ones,—which was nothing to us before,—rises and roots itself in our heart. Come with me,—conquer yourself,—let us begin to love each other truly, give me comfort and yourself—and you will bear to think again of Cécile and of God—there will be calm and peace beyond this pain.’

His eyes shone upon her through a mist. She said no more for a while. She lay exhausted and silent, the tears streaming once more down her haggard cheeks.

Then, thinking she had consented, he began to speak of arrangements for the journey—of the possibility of getting across the forest.

Instantly her passion returned. She sprang up and put him away from her.

‘It is ridiculous, I tell you—*ridiculous!* How can I decide in such an instant? You must go away and leave me to think.’

‘No,’ he said firmly, ‘my only chance is to stay with you.’

She walked up and down, saying wild incoherent things to herself under her breath. She wore the red dress she had worn at Manchester—now a torn and shabby rag—and over it, because of the cold, a long



black cloak, a relic of better days. Her splendid hair, uncombed and dishevelled, hung almost loose round her head and neck; and the emaciation of face and figure made her height and slenderness more abnormal than ever as she swept tempestuously to and fro.

At last she paused in front of him.

‘Well, I dare say I’ll go with you,’ she said, with the old reckless note. ‘That fiend thinks he has me in his power for good, he amuses himself with threats of leaving *me*—perhaps I’ll turn the tables. . . . But you must go—go for an hour. You can find out about a carriage. There will be an old woman here presently for the house-work. I’ll get her to help me pack. You’ll only be in the way.’

‘You’ll be ready for me in an hour?’ he said, rising reluctantly.

‘Well, it don’t look, does it, as if there was much to pack in this hole!’ she said with one of her wild laughs.

He looked round for the first time and saw a long bare studio, containing a table covered with etcher’s apparatus and some blocks for wood engraving. There was besides an easel, and a picture upon it, with a pretentious historical subject just blocked in, a tall oak chair and stool of antique pattern, and in one corner a stand of miscellaneous arms such as many artists affect—an old flintlock gun or two, some Moorish or Spanish rapiers and daggers. The north window was half blocked by snow, and the atmosphere of the place, in spite of the stove, was freezing.

He moved to the door, loth, most loth, to go, yet well aware, by long experience, of the danger of crossing her temper or her whims. After all, it would take him some time to make his arrangements with the landlord, and he would be back to the moment.

She watched him intently with her poor red eyes.

She herself opened the door for him, and to his amazement put a sudden hand on his arm, and kissed him—roughly, vehemently, with lips that burnt.

‘Oh, you fool!’ she said, ‘you fool!’

‘What do you mean?’ he said, stopping. ‘I believe I *am* a fool, Louie, to leave you for a moment.’

‘Nonsense! You are a fool to want to take me to Manchester, and I am a fool to think of going. There:—if I had never been born!—oh! go, for God’s sake, go! and come back in an hour. I *must* have some time, I tell you—’ and she gave a passionate stamp—‘to think a bit, and put my things together.’

She pushed him out, and shut the door. With a great effort he mastered himself and went.

He made all arrangements for the two-horse sledge that was to take them to Fontainebleau. He called for his bill, and paid it. Then he hung about the entrance to the forest, looking with an unseeing eye at the tricks which the snow had been playing with the trees, at the gleams which a pale and struggling sun was shedding over the white world—till his watch told him it was time.

He walked briskly back to the cottage, opened the outer door, was astonished to hear neither voice nor movement, to see nothing of the charwoman Louie had spoken of—rushed to the studio and entered.

She sat in the tall chair, her hands dropping over the arms, her head hanging forward. The cold snow-light shone on her open and glazing eyes—on the red and black of her dress, on the life-stream dripping among the folds, on the sharp curved Algerian dagger at her feet. She was quite dead. Even in the midst of his words of hope, the thought of self-destruction—of her mother—had come upon her and absorbed her. That capacity for sudden intolerable despair which she had inherited, rose to its full height when she had

driven David from her—guided her mad steps, her unshrinking hand.

He knelt by her—called for help, laid his ear to her heart, her lips. Then the awfulness of the shock, and of his self-reproach, the crumbling of all his hopes, became too much to bear. Consciousness left him, and when the woman of whom Louie had spoken did actually come in, a few minutes later, she found the brother lying against the sister's knee, his arms outstretched across her, while the dead Louie, with fixed and frowning brows, sat staring beyond him into eternity—a figure of wild fate—freed at last and for ever from that fierce burden of herself.

## EPILOGUE



*Alas!—Alas!*

—But to part from David Grieve under the impression of this scene of wreck and moral defeat would be to misread and misjudge a life, destined, notwithstanding the stress of exceptional suffering it was called upon at one time to pass through, to singularly rich and fruitful issues. Time, kind inevitable Time, dulled the paralysing horror of his sister's death, and softened the memory of all that long torture of publicity, legal investigation, and the like, which had followed it. The natural healing 'in widest commonalty spread,' which flows from affection, nature, and the direction of the mind to high and liberating aims, came to him also as the months and years passed. His wife's death, his sister's tragedy, left indeed indelible marks; but, though scarred and changed, he was in the end neither crippled nor unhappy. The moral experience of life had built up in him a faith which endured, and the pangs of his own pity did but bring him at last to rest the more surely on a pity beyond man's. During the nights of semi-delirium which followed the scene at Barbizon, John, who watched him, heard him repeat again and again words which seemed to have a talismanic power over his restlessness: 'Neither do I condemn thee. *Come, and sin no more.*' They were fragments dropped from what was clearly a nightmare of anguish and struggle; but they testified to a *set* of character, they threw light on the hopes and convictions which ultimately repossessed themselves of the sound man.

Two years passed. It was Christmas Eve. The firm of Grieve & Co. in Prince's Street was shut for the holiday, and David Grieve, a mile or two away, was sitting over his study fire with a book. He closed it presently, and sat thinking.

There was a knock at his door. When he opened it he found Dora outside. It was Dora, in the quasi-sister's garb she had assumed of late—serge skirt, long black cloak, and bonnet tied with white muslin strings under the throat. In her parish visiting among the worst slums of Ancoats, she had found such a dress useful.

'I brought Sandy's present,' she said, looking round her cautiously. 'Is his stocking hung up?'

'No! or the rascal would never go to sleep to-night. He is nearly wild about his presents as it is. Give it to me. It shall go into my drawer, and I will arrange everything when I go to bed to-night.'

He looked at the puzzle-map she had brought with a childish pleasure, and between them they locked it away carefully in a drawer of the writing-table.

'Do sit down and get warm,' he said to her, pushing forward a chair.

'Oh no! I must go back to the church. We shall be decorating till late to-night. But I had to be in Broughton, so I brought this on my way home.'

'Then Sandy and I will escort you, if you will have us. He made me promise to take him to see the shops. I suppose Market Street is a sight.'

He went outside to shout to Sandy, who was having his tea, to get ready, and then came back to Dora. She was standing by the fire looking at an engagement tablet filled with entries, on the mantelpiece.

'Father Russell says they have been asking you again to stand for Parliament,' she said timidly, as he came in.

‘Yes, there is a sudden vacancy. Old Jacob Cherritt is dead.’

‘And you won’t?’

He shook his head.

‘No,’ he said, after a pause. ‘I am not their man, they would be altogether disappointed in me.’

She understood the sad reverie of the face, and said no more.

No. For new friends, new surroundings, efforts of another type, his power was now irrevocably gone; he shrank more than ever from the egotisms of competition. But within the old lines he had recovered an abundant energy. Among his workmen; amid the details now fortunate, now untoward of his labours for the solution of certain problems of industrial ethics; in the working of the remarkable pamphlet scheme dealing with social and religious fact, which was fast making his name famous in the ears of the England which thinks and labours; and in the self-devoted help of the unhappy; he was developing more and more the idealist’s qualities, and here and there—invariably—the idealist’s mistakes. His face, as middle life was beginning to shape it—with its subtle and sensitive beauty—was at once the index of his strength and his limitations.

He and Dora stood talking a while about certain public schemes that were in progress for the bettering of Ancoats. Then he said with sudden emphasis:

‘Ah! if one could but jump a hundred years and see what England will be like! But these northern towns, and this northern life, on the whole fill one with hope. There is a strong social spirit and strong individualities to work on.’

Dora was silent. From her Churchwoman’s point of view the prospect was not so bright.



‘Well, people seem to think that co-operation is going to do everything,’ she said vaguely.

‘We all cry our own nostrums,’ he said, laughing; ‘what co-operation has done up here in the north is wonderful! It has been the making of thousands. But the world is not going to give itself over wholly to committees. There will be room enough for the one-man-power at any rate for generations to come. What we want is leaders; but leaders who will feel themselves “members of one body,” instruments of one social order.’

They stood together a minute in silence; then he went out to the stairs and called: ‘Sandy, you monkey, come along!’

Sandy came shouting and leaping downstairs, as lithe and handsome as ever, and as much of a compound of the elf and the philosopher.

‘I *know* Auntie Dora’s brought me a present,’ he said, looking up into her face,—‘but father’s locked it up!’

David chased him out of doors with contumely, and they all took the tram to Victoria Street.

Once there, Sandy was in the seventh heaven. The shops were ablaze with lights, and gay with every Christmas joy; the pavements were crowded with a buying and gaping throng. He pulled at his father’s hand, exclaiming here and pointing there, till David, dragged hither and thither, had caught some of the boy’s mirth and pleasure.

But Dora walked apart. Her heart was a little heavy and dull, her face weary. In reality, though David’s deep and tender gratitude and friendship towards her could not express themselves too richly, she felt, as the years went on, more and more divided from him and Sandy. She was horrified at the things which David published, or said in public; she had

long dropped any talk with the child on all those subjects which she cared for most. Young as he was, the boy showed a marvellous understanding in some ways of his father's mind, and there were moments when she felt a strange and dumb irritation towards them both.

Christmas too, in spite of her Christian fervour, had always its sadness for her. It reminded her of her father, and of the loneliness of her personal life.

'How father would have liked all this crowd!' she said once to David as they passed into Market Street.

David assented with instant sympathy, and they talked a little of the vanished wanderer as they walked along, she with a yearning passion which touched him profoundly.

He and Sandy escorted her up the Ancoats High Street, and at last they turned into her own road. Instantly Dora perceived a little crowd round her door, and, as soon as she was seen, a waving of hands and a Babel of voices.

'What is it?' she cried, paling, and began to run.

David and Sandy followed. She had already flown upstairs; but the shawled mill-girls, round the door, flushed with excitement, shouted their news into his ear.

'It's her feyther, sir, as ha coom back after aw these years—an he's sittin by the fire quite nat'ral like, Mary Styles says—and they put him in a mad-house in furrin parts, they did—an his hair's quite white—and oh! sir, yo mun just goo up an look.'

Pushed by eager hands, and still holding Sandy, David, though half unwilling, climbed the narrow stairs.

The door was half open. And there, in his old chair, sat Daddy, his snow-white hair falling on his shoulders, a childish excitement and delight on his blanched face.

Dora was kneeling at his feet, her head on his knees, sobbing.

David took Sandy up in his arms.

‘Be quiet, Sandy; don’t say a word.’

And he carried him downstairs again, and into the midst of the eager crowd.

‘I think,’ he said, addressing them, ‘I would go home if I were you—if you love her.’

They looked at his shining eyes and twitching lips, and understood.

‘Aye, sir, aye, sir, ye’re abeawt reet—we’st not trouble her, sir.’

He carried his boy home, Sandy raining questions in a tumult of excitement. Then when the child was put to bed he sat on in his lonely study, stirred to his sensitive depths by the thought of Dora’s long waiting and sad sudden joy—by the realisation of the Christmas crowds and merriment—by the sharp memory of his own dead. Towards midnight, when all was still, he opened the locked drawer which held for him the few things which symbolised and summed up his past—a portrait of Lucy, by the river under the trees, taken by a travelling photographer, not more than six weeks before her death—a little collection of pictures of Sandy from babyhood onwards—Louie’s breviary—his father’s dying letter—a book which had belonged to Ancrum, his vanished friend. But though he took thence his wife’s picture, communing awhile, in a passion of yearning, with its weary plaintive eyes, he did not allow himself to sink for long into the languor of memory and grief. He knew the perils of his own nature, and there was in him a stern sense of the difficulty of living aright, and the awfulness of the claim made by God and man on the strength and will of the individual. It seemed to him that he had been

'taught of God' through natural affection, through repentance, through sorrow, through the constant energies of the intellect. Never had the Divine voice been clearer to him, or the Divine Fatherhood more real. Freely he had received—but only that he might freely give. On this Christmas night he renewed every past vow of the soul, and in so doing rose once more into that state and temper which is man's pledge and earnest of immortality—since already, here and now, it is the eternal life begun.

THE END



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